



TREASURE OF DRAVYAGUNA - THE NIGHANTU- A REVIEW

Monika Sharma¹, Ankita²

1. 2nd Year PG Scholar, PG Dept. Of Dravyaguna, Post Graduate Training & Research Institute, Govt. Ayurvedic College & Hospital, Patiala, Punjab
2. Lecturer, PG Dept. Of Dravyaguna, Post Graduate Training & Research Institute, Govt. Ayurvedic College & Hospital, Patiala, Punjab

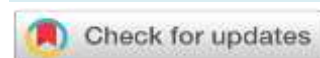
Corresponding Author: ms1073918@gmail.com<https://doi.org/10.46607/iamj1011012023>

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ABSTRACT

The study of *Nighantu* literature is the foremost aspect in the study of *Ayurveda* and specially in the subject of *Dravyaguna Vijnana*. The *Nighantu* literature is as ancient as *Ayurveda*. It is presumed that from *Samhita kala Nighantu* was formed. *Nighantu* of *Sushruta* is named *Soushruta Nighantu* and another by *Vagbhata* the *Astanga Nighantu* was also named after *Ashtanga*¹. Still, much importance has not been given to the study of *Nighantu*. The ancient *Nighantus* were actually like *Kosha*, containing the *Paryaya* (Synonyms) of *Dravya*. Later on, the *Aushadha* (Drugs) description, their *Guna* (Properties), *Karma* (Actions), and their uses were added. In a true sense, the *Nighantu* means a collection of words, *Paryaya* (Synonyms), and the names of the medicinal *Dravya*. *Nighantus* form an integral part of *Dravyaguna Vigyan* and for the study of medicinal herbs, an elaborative study of *Nighantus* is important.

Keywords: *Nighantu*, *Dravyaguna*, *Ayurvedic Herbs*

INTRODUCTION

“*Yaska*” is called *Nighantu* as *Nigama* and *Nirukta* and is used synonymously. *Nirukthas* throw light into the secret meanings of *Vedas*, whereas *Nighantus* explain

the terms used for the variety of *Aushadha* (Drugs) in *Samhitas*, concerning its *Paryaya* (Synonyms, Homonyms) and *Gunakarmas* (Pharmacological profile). At

a later point in time, the *Nighantu* were analyzed in two aspects. One gives the *Paryaya* (Synonyms of words) and the other which gives the meaning of words along with its *Karma* (Actions) and *Amayika prayoga* (Therapeutical aspects). Ramavatar Sharma in his introduction to *Kalpadru Kosha* of Kesava uses the term *Nighantu* for the glossaries connected with *Ayurveda*². To understand precisely what is aimed these glossaries are called '*Ayurveda Nighantu*'. The *Nighantu* may be defined as a *Kosha* (Glossary) containing *Paryaya* (Synonymous groups), the *Nama Roopa* (Names) of the drugs, plants, animals, minerals, or anything that is administered either as *Aahara* (Food) or *Aushadha* (Medicine) to the *Aatura*

(Patient)³. In *Vachaspatyam*, *Nighantus* is explained as a kind of work where *Paryaya* (Synonyms) are collected. As per *Raj Nighantu*, the most learned *Chikitsaka* (Physician) cannot treat the *Vyadhi* (Disease) without the knowledge of *Aushadha* (Drug) which can only be done by detail study of *Nighantu* because there are numerous types of *Aushadha Dravya* (Drugs) with different *Rasa*, *Guna*, *Veerya*, *Vipaka*, etc. So, the study of *Nighantus* holds importance for *Chikitsaka* (Physician).

Table No. 1: Description of Ancient *Nighantu* with Author names & Time Period
ANCIENT PERIOD - UPTO 7th CENTURY A.D⁴

NIGHANTU	AUTHOR	TIME PERIOD
VEDIC NIGHANTU	----	----
SOUSHRUT NIGHANTU	SUSHRUTA	5 th Century AD
RAS VAISHESHIKA	NAGARJUNA	5 th Century AD

Table No. 2: Description of Medieval Period with Author names & Time Period
MIDIEVAL PERIOD – FROM 8 - 15th CENTURY A.D⁵

NIGHANTU	AUTHOR	TIME PERIOD
ASHTANGA NIGHANTU	VAHATACHARYA “ASHTABHATT”	8 th Century AD
PARYAYA RATNA MALA	INDERKARASUNU MADHAVA	9 th Century AD
SIDHA SARA NIGHANTU	RAVIDUTT GUPTA	9 th Century AD
HARMEKHALA NIGHANTU	MADHUKA	10 th Century AD
DHANVANTRI NIGHANTU	MAHENDRA BHAUGIK	10-13 th Century AD
ARUN DUTT NIGHANTU	ARUN DUTT	11-12 th Century AD
DRAVYA GUNA SAMGREH	CHAKRAPANI	11 th Century AD
VASHPA CHANDRA NIGHANTU	VASHPA CHANDRA	12 th Century AD
NIGHANTU SHESHA	HEM CHANDRA	12 th Century AD
MADHAVA DRAVYAGUNA	MADHAVA	13 th Century AD
SIDHA MANTRA	KESHAV	13 th Century AD
HRIDYA DEEPAK NIGHANTU	BOPDEV	13 th Century AD
AYURVEDA MOH DADHI / ANNAPANA VIDHI	SUSHENA DEV	14 th Century AD
MADAN VINOD / MADANPAL NIGHANTU	MADANPAL	14 th Century AD
KAYDEV NIGHANTU	KAYDEV	15 th Century AD

Table No. 3: Description of Modern Period with Author names & Time Period
MODERN PERIOD FROM 16th CENTURY A.D⁶

NIGHANTU	AUTHOR	TIME PERIOD
BHAV PRAKASH NIGHANTU	BHAV MISHRA	16 th Century AD
SHIV KOSH	SHIV DUTTA	16 th Century AD
RAJ-NIGHANTU	PANDIT NARAHARI	17 th Century AD
VAIDYA VATANSA	LOLIMBRAJA	17 th Century AD
DRAVYA GUNA SHATAKA	TRIMALLA BHATT	17 th Century AD
RAJ- VALLABHA NIGHANTU	RAJ VALLABHA	18 th Century AD
HIQMAT PRAKASH	MAHADEV	18 th Century AD
NIGHANTU RATNAKAR	VISHNU VASUDEV GODHBOLE	18 th Century AD
NIGHANTU SANGREH	RAGHUNATH JI	19 th Century AD
SHALIGRAM NIGHANTU	SHALIGRAM	19 th Century AD
NIGHANTU AADARSH	PT. BAPALAL SHAH	20 th Century AD; (1928)
VANA AUSHADHI CHANDRAODEY	CHANDRA RAJ BHANDARI	1938
PRIYA NIGHANTU	P.V. SHARMA	20 th Century AD; (1983)
DRAVYA GUNA KOSHA	P. V. SHARMA	1997
VEDI VANASPAT KOSHA	RAMESHVEDI	1997

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Data collected from all *Nighantu*; Journals are described along with the detailed study of each *Nighantu* according to different *Kaala*.

RASA VAISHESHIKA

Author - Bhadanta Nagarjuna (5th Century AD.) *Rasa vaisheshika* is the only treatise of the 5th century AD which puts forth unique concepts like the formation of a seedling from *Pancha Mahabhoota*, the color of *Pancha Mahabhoota*, *Karma Veerya Vada*, reasons for changes in *Rasa*, reasons for changes in *Vipaka*, 10 *Karmanya guna*, and the concept of substitution of *Dravya* based on its *Rasa Panchaka teevrata* or *man-data*. This *Nighantu* mentioned *six padartha*.

ASHTANGA NIGHANTU⁷

Author – Vahattacharya (8th Century AD.) This *Nighantu* is also called *Ashtanga Hridaya Nighantu*. It is considered as oldest *Nighantu*. The author of *Ash-tanga Hridaya*, *Acharya Vagbhata* has elucidated different *Dravyas* (Drugs) as per their *Paryaya* (Synonyms) mentioned under various *Ganas*. Hence, *Vahattacharya* is considered different from *Acharya Vagbhata* because several *Dravyas* are mentioned in *Ashtanga Hridaya Nighantu* which is not available in *Ashtanga Hridaya* as well as *Ashtanga Samgreh*.

PARYAYA RATNA MALA⁸

Author – Madhava (9th Century AD.) This *Nighantu* is in concise form and mainly focused on *Paryaya* (Synonyms) of the *Aushadha* (Drug). There is no division

of *Vargas*. *Shlokas* are mentioned in continuous form. In this *Nighantu*, *Vijaya* word is used for *Haritaki* and *Jayanti* not for *Bhanga*. Also explains the concept of *Mana* and *Paribhasha*.

SIDHA SARA NIGHANTU⁹

Author – Ravigupta (9th Century AD.) Also called Sarrotar *Nighantu*. This *Nighantu* contains 193 verses in the *shloka*. In the end, *Dravyavali* is given. Its several verses are borrowed by *vrinda* in his *sidhyoga* and are often quoted by *Chandrata*.

DHANVANTRI NIGHANTU¹⁰

Author - Mahendra bhaugik (10-13th Century AD.) The original name of this *Nighantu* (Lexicon) is *Dravyavali Samucchaya*. This *Nighantu* (Lexicon) is also called *Dravyabali*, *Gunavali*, or *Guduchyadi Nighantu*. *Nighantu* contains seven *Vargas* namely *Guduchadi Varga*, *Shatapushpadi Varga*, *Chandanadi Varga*, *Karaviradi Varga*, *Amradi Varga*, *Suvarnadi Varga*, and *Mishrakadi Varga*, and the total numbers of drugs are 527. The *Aushadha Dravya* (Drugs) classified in this book are based on *Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya*, *Vipaka*, etc. The *Nighantu* starts with a salutation to Lord *Dhanvantari*, Thereafter the *Paryaya* (Synonyms) and *Karma* (Properties) of the *Aushadha* (Drugs)¹¹. Both *Charaka* & *Susruta* have mentioned one *Aushadha Dravya* (Drug) under many *Ganas* /*Vargas*. But this text described one *Aushadha Dravya* (Drug) under one *Gana* only. The *Aushadha Dravya* (Drugs) are named on the basis of the first *Aushadha Dravya* (Drug) mentioned in that *varga*. Then each *Varga* is divided into different *Ganas* based on *Karma* (Pharmacological properties). The author described some extra *Aushadha Dravya* (Drugs) also at the end of each *Varga*. They are actually not mentioned in the original *Vargas*. Though the author is inspired by *Charaka* and *Susruta* he maintained his speciality. For example, *Dadima* is mentioned under *Phala varga* in the treatises. But in this text, *Dadima* is mentioned in the *Satapushpadi varga*. Likewise, the *Banana* is described in *Karaveeradi varga*. *Ahiphena* is the first time mentioned in this *Nighantu* by the name of *Afuka*. Also, only one type of *karpura* i.e *Bhimaseni karpura*

is given. *Bahula* word is used instead of *tamboola*. *Amber* is described by the name of *Agnijara* for the first time.

ARUN DUTT NIGHANTU¹²

Author – Arun Dutt (11-12th Century AD.) *Vardhamana* in his *Ganaratna – Mahodadhi* has quoted a verse from Arun Dutt regarding properties of *Rasona* (*Garlic*). From this, it is evident that there was some *Nighantu* composed by Arun Dutt.

DRAVYA GUNA SAMGREH¹³

Author –Chakrapani (11th Century AD.) In this *Nighantu* author explained *Dravyaguna vigyana* in his *Shlokas*. He took *Charaka* and *Sushruta*'s treatise as a base for explaining *Dravyaguna Vigyan*. It includes 15 *Varga*'s like *Mamsa varga*, *Shaka varga*, *Dhanya varga* etc. Before explaining *Dhanya Varga* the author gave the *Lakshana* of *Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya*, and *Vipaka*.

VASHPA CHANDRA NIGHANTU

Author – Vashpa Chandra (12th Century AD.)

NIGHANTU SHESHA¹⁴ Author – Hem chandra (12th Century AD.) Author have mentioned 6 *Kaand* i.e *Vriksha kaand*, *Gulma kaand*, *Lata kaand*, *Shaka kaand*, *Trina kaand*, *Dhanya kaand*. Among Hem Chandra's other works *Abhidhana Chintamani*, *Anekatha Samgraha* and *Desi namamala* are noteworthy.

SHODHALA NIGHANTU¹⁵ Author – Shodhala (12th Century AD.) This *Nighantu* is otherwise known as '*Guna Sangraha*' or '*Nama Sangraha*'. In the text, he described the properties of *Aushadha* (Drugs) with their *Rasa*, *Veerya*, *Vipaka*, etc. & explanation is not too detailed or too concise style so that the same may be easily understood. This text has an intimate relation with *Dhanwantari Nighantu*. There are 27 *Vargas*. The first 7 are common with *Dhanwantari Nighantu*. The difference is that the 7th group is *Misraka Varga* in *Dhanwantari Nighantu* while it is named *Lakshmanadi Varga* in this text. *Karpura tritaya*, *Patha dvaya*, *Khadira dvaya*, etc. are explained in this *Nighantu*.

MADHAVA DRAVYA GUNA¹⁶

Author – Madhava (13th Century AD.) This *Nighantu* is classified into 29 *Varga* in which the first *varga* is named *Vividhaushadi varga* and the last one is called *Prakirna varga* and includes a total of 900 *shlokas*. Based on *Sushruta Samhita* the subject matter is arranged under two broad heads. *Drava dravya* (Liquids) and *Anna Pana Vidhi* (Diet). Though *Madhava* did not use these words directly, he opted for the same arrangement.

SIDHA MANTRA¹⁷

Author – Keshava (13th Century AD.) It contains 8 *Varga*'s based on *Kosha* i.e *Vataghna*, *Pittaghan*, *Kaphaghan*, *Vatapittaghan*, *Pittakaphaghan*, *Vatakaphaghana*, *Doshaghan*, *Doshala*. Acc. to *Anshansh kalpana* of *dosha* there are 57 *Varga*. In the First 9 *Shlokas* description of *Maulik Siddhant* is given.

HRIDAYA DEEPAKA NIGHANTU¹⁸

Author – Bopadeva. (13th Century AD.) *Acharya Bopadeva* wrote 26 books. There are Ten books on Sanskrit grammar, Nine books on *Ayurveda*, One book on *Jyotisha*, Three Books on literature, and Three books on *Bhagavadgita*. The subject matter of this text is divided into eight *Vargas* viz. *Chatushpada Varga*-*Yasthimadhu* to *Swamam*, *Tripada Varga* *Aragwadha* to *Kamalam*, *Dwipada Varga* *Madana phala* to *Vetasa*, *Eka pada Varga* *Swama Ksheer* to *Rishabhaka*, *Dwi Nama Varga* *Tinisa* to *Surana*, *Eka Nama Varga* *Sankhini* to *Hilamochika*, *Nanartha Varga* *Koshataki* to *Haritaki*, *Mishraka Varga*-Food materials etc.

AYURVEDA MOH DADHI¹⁹

Author- Sushena Dev – (14th Century AD.) It is mainly a text of *dravyaguna* containing a description of dietary articles. Thus, it is also known as '*Annapanavidhi*'. There is a description of *kharjura* and *Suvarnakadali*. As *Ritu Haritaki* is mentioned in *Bhav Prakash Nighantu*. Here, *Vidhana* of *Matulunga* is given.

MADAN VINOD²⁰

Author- Madanpal (14th Century AD.) *Madanapala Nighantu* is also known as *Madana Vinod*. The text is divided into the following 13 sections: *Abhayadi*, *Shuntyadi*, *Karpuradi*, *Suvarnadi*, *Vatadi*, *Phaladi/Drakshadi*, *Shaaka*, *Paaniyadi*, and *Ikshukadi*. *Karveer dvaya* is given one is *Shveta* and the other is *Rakta*. Among all *Nighantu*, *Yashada dhatu* is described first in this *nighantu*.

KAYDEV NIGHANTU²¹

Author – Kaydev Pandit (15th Century AD.) Also known as *Pathya-Apathya Vibhodaka*. It consists of Nine *vargas*. Out of them, *Vihar* and *Nanartha varga* are given by this *Nighantu*. Three types of *Haritaki* named as *Neerja*, *Vanaja*, *Girija*. Out of these *Girija* is considered as best.

BHAV PRAKASH NIGHANTU²²

Author- Bhava Mishra (16th Century AD.) Most popular *Nighantu* of modern times. It contains 23 *varga*. Starting from *Haritaki* and ending up to *Anekarth varga*. As 1st *varga* is named *Haritakiadi* the *Nighantu* is also called *Haritakiadi Nighantu*. It follows *Madanpal nighantu* and also *samhita* portion is taken from *Sharangdhar Samhita*. *Anekartha varga* is only mentioned in *Bhav Prakash nighantu*. *Bala chatusthaya*, *deepantara vacha* (*chopchini*), *Firanga roga*, *chatura beeja*, *chandrashura*, Apple all these *Dravyas* are first explained in this *nighantu*. The names of *mahabhoota* are mentioned with the alphabet 'V' as *Veeyat*, *Vayu*, *Vrihin*, *Vari*, and *Vasundhara*. The first chapter starts with *Haritaki* which is *Sara* (Purgative) in nature. He also described other purgatives like *Trivrit*, *Katuki*, and *Trayamana* in continuation. Later *Grahi* (Astringent) drugs like *Kutaja*, *Indrayava*, *Musta*, *Bilva*, etc. are described. Aromatic substances are divided into *Pittaghna*, *Vataghna* & *Kaphaghna* such as *Chandana*, *Kumkuma*, and *Karpura* respectively. Drugs effective in the upper respiratory tract and fevers were described in the end. After vegetable drug minerals products have been described. Apart from *Sushruta Samhita*, the author has closely followed A. S and A. H.

RAJ NIGHANTU²³

Author – Pt. Nara Hari (17th Century AD.) Also known by the name of Nighantu Raj, Avidhana Chudamani, and Churan Samgreh. Mainly follows Dhanvantari Nighantu. Only *Nighantu* Which defines *Ashtanga Vibhajana* and Placed *Dravya guna* on the top (first) place. Taxonomical division of *Ayurvedic* herbs or herbal plants. *Peeta karvira, jhandu* is first given by Raj Nighantu. *Sthavara dravya* is divided into 5 groups *Vanapati, Vanspatya, Kshup, Valli, and Aushadi*. The total *varga* mentioned are 23 in number.

VAIDYA VATANSA²⁴

Author – Lolimbraj (17th Century AD.) The basis for this composition has been taken from *Vagbhata*. Contains seven *varga* and completes whole *Nighantu* in 57 *shlokas*. It is a kind of *Laghu nighantu* in which *Aahar varga* is mentioned in compiled form.

DRAVYA GUNA SHATAKA²⁵

Author – Trimalla Bhatt (17th Century AD.) Also called *Dravya Guna Shata Shloka*. It contains 15 *varga* and 101 pada. The author used *Garjar* instead of *Granjan* for the *Gajar* word.

SHIVA KOSHA²⁶

Author- Shiva Dutta (17th Century AD.) It is called *Nanarth Aushadh Kosha*. It Contains 540 *shlokas*. This *Nighantu* basically focused on *Paryaya* (Synonyms) of *Dravyas* and wrote names of *Dravyas* based on *Ritu, Varna*, and religious factors.

RAJ – VALLABHA NIGHANTU²⁷

Author – Raj vallabha (18th Century AD.) Contains 6 Paricheda that is - *Prabhatika, Poorvahika, Madhyanika, Aprahika, Nishabhav, and Aushadhiya*. It gives importance to the *Guna* (Properties) and *karma* (Actions) of herbs mainly used in *dincharya*.

HIQMAT PRAKASH

Author – Mahadev (18th Century AD.) In this *Nighantu* 3 *khandas* are described.

NIGHANTU RATNAKARA²⁸

Author – Vishnu Vasudev Godhbole (19th Century AD.) There are 2 *Khandas* in this *Nighantu*. The former explained *Dravyaguna* in the first *Gunadosha Prakarna*. *Sharira Prakarna* is explained on the basis of *Sharira Sathana* of *Sushruta Samhita*. Also, *Ashta Sthana Pariksha* and *Mana Paribhasha, etc.* Are explained and the latter explained the *Nidana* (Causes), *Samprapti* (Pathogenesis), *Lakshana* (Symptoms), and *Chikitsa* (Treatment).

NIGHANTU SAMGREH

Author –Raghunath ji (19th Century AD.) It contains a description of 607 drugs among which 578 are plants. Several new drugs have been incorporated into the text.²⁹

SHALI GRAM NIGHANTU³⁰

Author – Shaligram Vaishya (19th Century AD.) It is based on Brihat Nighantu Ratnakar written by Pt. Dutta ram chaubey. Last *nighantu* of 19th century. It is Divided into two *khandas* one is *Poorvaardha* which contains 23 *vargas* other is *Uttarardha* which contains 2 *varga*. Here, the author explained the *Matra* (Dose), *Anupana*, and *Sevana vidhi* (Method of intake) of *Aushadha* (Drugs).

NIGHANTU AADARSH³¹

Author – Pt. Bapa lal shah (20th Century AD.) Various controversial *dravyas* such as *Gandeera, Rasna, Nakuli, Amlika, Ashtavarga, etc* are given here in a descriptive manner. It Contains 73 *vargas*.

VANA AUSHADHI CHANDRAODEY³²

Author - Chandra Raj Bhandari (1938) A voluminous work in 10 volumes contained a description of plants arranged alphabetically.

PRIYA NIGHANTU

Author – P. V Sharma (20th Century AD.) This *Nighantu* explains only the applied aspect of medicinal plants. The *Nighantu* is divided into 13 sections or *Vargas*, viz: *Haritakyadi Varga*,

Pippalyadi Varga, Shatapushpadi Varga, Sharadi Varga, Kasturyadi Varga, Suvarnadi Varga, Shaka Varga, Phala Varga, Mamsa Varga, Dhanya Varga, Kritanna Varga, Drava Varga, Dravyadi Varga. Here an attempt is made to elaborate on each drug and its therapeutic application in various health ailments³³. It's second revised edition published in 1995, *Anekartha paryayas* had been deleted and only *Ekartha vachanam* has been retained.³⁴

DISCUSSION

Nighantus forms the basis to study *Dravyaguna* and gave a detailed aspect of *Aushadha Dravya* (Plants) for their identification, sources, and therapeutic use. *Nighantu* contains synonyms that throw light on different aspects of the entity and expose their hidden meaning. Today's world looks towards reverse pharmacology and hence traditional medicines are in limelight. The contribution of these *Nighantus* in the field of ethnobotany and pharmacotherapeutics is path-breaking. Preservation of health has been the instinctive necessity of mankind and in *Ayurveda*, *Dravyas* play an important role in *Chikitsa* (Treatment). *Chikitsa* is only possible with the right identification of *Dravyas*. Though the synonyms we meant to aid in identification, the repetition of names for different drugs based on their local utility leads to controversy. *Nighantu* throws light to rectify the controversies. So, knowledge of different *Nighantu* is important.

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