

## LITERATURE REVIEW OF *PALASH (BUTEA MONOSPERMA LAMK. TAUB)*

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### ABSTRACT

The *Palash (Butea monosperma Lamk.Taub.)* belonging to family Fabaceae is used for therapeutic uses since ancient time. Most of the regions of India, it is used for worship of god as well as in many festivals. *Palash* is pungent (*katu*), bitter (*tikta*) and astringent (*kashay*) in taste (*Rasa*), and its *vipaka* is *katu* and *veerya* is *ushna*. It alleviates *kapha* and *vata doshas*, but aggravates the *pitta doshas*. The flowers of *Palash* are bitter (*tikta*), pungent (*katu*) and astringent (*kashay*) in test (*Rasa*), *madhur vipaka* and *sheeta veerya*. So it alleviates *pitta* and *kapha dosha* and *vata doshas*. In literature it is found that *Palash* is useful in many diseases like *Trishna* (Thrust), *Atisara* (Diarrhoea), *Pradara* (leucorrhoea), *Jwara* (fever), *Charmarog* (Skin diseases), *Astibanga* (Fracture), *Vatarakta* (gout), *Kushta* (Leprosy), *Apasmara* (epilepsy), *Prameha* (Diabetic). There has been worldwide renewal of interest in herbal system of medicines. *Palash (Butea monosperma (Lamk.)Taub)* has been widely used in the traditional Indian medical system of 'Ayurveda' for the treatment of a variety of ailments. It is very essentials to have a proper documentation of such useful medicinal plants. In this review an attempt to compile and document information from literature on *Palash*.

**Keywords:** *Palash (Butea monosperma Lamk.Taub.)*, Therapeutic uses, *Palash* flowers

### INTRODUCTION

*Palash (Butea monosperma Lamk.Taub)*<sup>[1]</sup>, is medium-sized deciduous tree, 10-15 meters high belonging to the family Fabaceae, is found throughout India. There are four type of *Palash* viz. *Rakta* (red), *Pita* (yellow), *Shweta* (white) and *Nila* (blue) as mentioned by *Narahari* in *Raj Nighantu*<sup>[2]</sup>. Out of above varieties, *Shweta* and *Nila* are seldom available and *Pita* is rare. As *Pita* variety becomes endangered the abundantly available *Rakta* variety is used commonly in medicines and it is called as flame of the forest<sup>[3]</sup>.

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It is the most important plant for *Yajna (ritual)* according to *Vedic* literature.

In India, in most of the regions it used in worship of god. In many festivals it is used in different way. According to an ancient science of life i.e. *Ayurveda*, there is always scientific theory behind celebrating any festivals and *Aacharyas* have scientific view for using any drug as medicine. The use of *Rakta Palash* flowers used for 'Holi', i.e. festival of colour in India. The thought behind it was that, the colour prepared from flowers is natural, good for skin and has no any adverse effect. Though there is an evidence of the uses of *Palash* since ancient time its review was chosen for study.

### Drug review of *Palash*

#### 1. Historical Aspects:

The references of *Palash* tree are found in *Vedic* literatures. It is mentioned in *Vedic* literature that *Palash* tree is a form of 'Agnidevta' i.e. the god of fire. The dry stem of *Palash* was used to make sacred fire<sup>[4]</sup>. Since old ages this plant is used for ritual process in all ways. In Telanagana, these flowers are specially used in the worship of lord *Shiva* on occasion of *Shivratri*. In Kerala, this is called as *Plasu* and *Chamata*. *Chamata* is the vernacular version of *Sanskrit* word *Samidha*, small pieces of wood that is used for *Agnihotra* or fire ritual. In Theravada Buddhism, it is said to have used as the tree for achieved enlightenment or Bodhi by second lord Buddha. As per history of *Palash* forests, *dhak* forests covered much of the doab area between the Ganges and Yamuna, but these were cleared for agriculture in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as the English East Company increased tax demands on the peasants<sup>[5]</sup>.

**Nirukti-**पलाशः प्रशस्तान् पलशान् पत्राण सान्त अस्य इति ।<sup>[6]</sup>

*Palash*, 'the tree having beautiful and useful leaves'.

**Vyutpatti-**।कशुक क्रशतः प्रकाशयात् कर्मणः ।<sup>[7]</sup>

The *Sanskrit* word '*Palash*' literally means looks like a flesh or blood.<sup>[8]</sup>

## 2. Vedic Era:-

The reference of *Palash* is found in *Vedic* literature. The use of *Palash* is common in *Vedic* period not only to treat diseases but also in routine life and in holy rituals also. *Samidha* of this plant was used at that time for different *Homa* and *Yadnyas*<sup>[9]</sup>. According to '*Kaushik Sutra*', *Palasha* is *Medhajanan*. Keshav told it was '*Sarvaroga Bhesaja*' and it was also used in *Krimi Roga*<sup>[10]</sup>. In *Rigveda*, the description of *Palash* is found by synonym i.e. *Kimshuk* (Synonym of *Palash*) found on *sukta* 85 of *adhyaya* 7 of *mandal* 10. This synonym is given for *Palash* because of its attractive color of the flowers<sup>[11]</sup>. In *Athervaveda*, the reference of *Palash* is found in the context of wound healing. Here the synonym *Parna* is used for it<sup>[12]</sup>. In *Upanishad*, importance and description of *Palash* has been described. In this ancient text the flower of *Palash* described beautifully. It is mentioned that the flower looks like flesh because of its red color. In this tree there is the seat

of *Bramha*, therefore this tree is most important among all *vanaspati*.

## 2. Samhita Era:-

**Charak Samhita:** In *Caraka Samhita*, *Palash* is not described in *Mahakasaya*<sup>[13]</sup>. But it is mentioned in *Sutra*, *Chikitsa*, and *Siddhi sthana* for treating the diseases like *Arsha*, *Atisar*, etc. by the only name *Palash* in *Charak Samhita*. [Table no.1]

**Sushrut Samhita:** In *Susruta Samhita*, *Palash* is described in *Rodhradi*, *Muskakadi*, *Ambasthadi* and *Nyagrodhadi Gana*<sup>[14]</sup>. [Table no.2]

**Kashyapa Samhita:** In this *Samhita* kwath of *Palash* is used to give mukti from '*Sheetaputana grah*' for kids.

**Ashtang Hridaya:** In *Astanga Hridaya*, *Palash* is mentioned in *Rodhradi*, *Muskakadi*, *Ambasthadi* and *Nyagrodhadi Gana*<sup>[15]</sup>. In *Astanga Sangraha*, *Palash* is mentioned in *Rodhradi*, *Muskakadi*, *Ambasthadi* and *Nyagrodhadi Gana*<sup>[16]</sup>. Referances found in *Chikitsa sthana-2/43- Raktapitta*, *Chikitsa sthana-9/68- Atisar*.

**Chakradutta:** He has told utility of *Palash* same as *Acharya Charak* but he used *Kimshuk* as its synonym. *Palash* is also mentioned in *Cikitsagranthas* like *Gadanigraha*, *Bhaishajya Ratnavali* and *Bhava-prakasha Samhita*.

## 4. Nighantu Era:

In *Nighantu*, many drugs have been described in detail by giving different synonyms and their properties and uses. The synonyms of *Palash* which are found in most of the *Nighantu* are *Brahmavriksha*, *Kimshuka*, *Parna*, *Yajniya*, *Raktapuspa*, *Samidvara* and *Vatapotha* etc. Many of the *Nighantu* have described the properties of *Palash*. i. e., the *Rasa* of *Palash* as '*tikta* and *kashaya*', *Virya ushna* but flower of *Palash* is '*sheet*' in nature. The fruit is *laghu*, *ushna* and used in *Prameha*, *Arsha*, *Krimi* and *Vatakaphaja rogas*, according to *Bhavaprakash Nighantu*<sup>[17]</sup>. While in *Nighantu Adarsh*, the *rasa* of *Palash* is *katu*, *tikta*, *kasaya*, *virya- ushna*, *vipaka - katu*, *Doshaghnta- Kaphavatanasaka*<sup>[18]</sup>.

## Palash in Nighnatu

1) *Raj nighnatu*- Palash flowers and beeja are mentioned in *Raj nighantu* in *Karviryadiavarga* for *Kushtha* and *Pama* (skin diseases)

2) *Bhavaprakash nighnatu*- Palash Flowers and Beeja in *Vatadi varga* as *Krumighna* and *Kushtha*

3) *Dhanvantari nighnatu* -Navpatra in *Aamradi varga* for *Pliha*, *Gulma*, *Grahani*, *Arsha* and Beeja in *Aamardi varga* as *Krumighna*

4) *Shodhal nighnatu* -Kanda in *Amradi varga* as *Rasayan* and Beeja in *Amradi* as *Krumighna*

5) *Madanpal nighantu*- Flowers in *Vatadi varga* as *Grahi* and Beeja in *Vatadi varga* as *Krumighna*[Table no.3]

### 5. Modern Era:-

1) **Indian Material Medica** <sup>[19]</sup> -The author of this book has mentioned vernacular names and chemical constituents of this drug. Flowers are indicated in many diseases.

2) **Data base on medicinal plants used in Ayurveda Vol I** <sup>[20]</sup> -Detail explanation regarding *Palash* plant has been given such as family, classical text, vernacular names, morphology, useful parts, along with pharmacognosy, chemical constituents, pharmacological activity, toxicology and therapeutic evaluation is explained.

3) **Medicinal plants quality standards of Indian medicinal plants** <sup>[21]</sup> -Description regarding plant is given and also all types of phytochemical tests are explained in details.

4) **The Ayurvedic Pharmacopeia of India** <sup>[22]</sup> -It includes pharmacopeial standard of *Palash*. Scientific data on *Palash* is available in this text.

5) **Indian Medicinal Plants** <sup>[23]</sup> -*Palash* is mentioned in this book including sanskrit meaning, paryay, properties, and uses of *Palash*.

### Synonyms of *Palash* and its interpretation

Synonyms have lot of importance in *Ayurveda*. It originates from the properties and action of the drugs. Sometimes synonyms of the drug indicate specificity and specialty of the drug.

**Kimshuk** -Flowers looks like beak of parrot, **Palash** -Leaves are beautiful, **Triparna**- Three foliate leaves, **Raktapushpa** -Flowers are of red colour, **Yadnyik**- Used in *yajna* since *vedic* period, **Beejs-**

**neha** -Seeds are oily, **Samidvara** -Describing its usefulness in rituals as *samidha*, **Krumighna**- Pacifies *krimi*

### Vernacular names of *Palash* <sup>[24]</sup>

**English**-Flame of forest, Bastard teak, **Hindi** -*Dhak*, *Palas*, **Assamese**-*Palash*, **Bengali**-*Palas*, *Palash Gaccha*, **Gujarati**-*Khakara*, *Khakda*, *Khakhado*, *Khakhar*, *Khakar*, *Kesuda*, **Kannada**-*Muttagamara*, *Muttug*, *Muttulu*, **Konkani**-*Palash*, **Malayalam**-*Plasu*, *Pilacham*, *Palashin*, *Palash*, **Marathi**-*Palas*, **Oriya**-*Porasur*, **Punjabi**-*Chichara*, *Dhak*, *Palas*, **Sanskrit**- *Palash*, *Kimshuk*, *Vakrapushpa*, *Bhramavruksha*, *Raktapushpa*, **Tamil**-*Palashmaram*, *Chamata*, **Telugu**-*Modugai*, *Paladu*, *Chettu*, **Bihari**-*Faras*, *Paras*, **Kashmiri**-*Dhak*, **Urdu**-*Dhak*, *Tesu*

### Botanical classification <sup>[25]</sup>

Kingdom	-	Plantae (plants)
Subkingdom	-	Angiosperms
Superdivision	-	Eudicots
Division	-	Rosids
Order	-	Fabales
Family	-	Fabaceae
Genus	-	<i>Butea</i>
Species	-	<i>B.monosperma</i>

### Properties (*Rasapanchak*)<sup>[26]</sup>

**Flower** -*Ras* -*Tikta*, *Katu*, *Kashay*, *Guna* -*Laghu*, *Singdha*, *Veerya* -*Sheet*, *Vipaka* -*Madhur* *Doshagnata* -*Kaphapittashamaka*

**Bark, Leaf, Seed, Gum** -*Rasa*-*Katu*, *Tikta*, *Kashay*, *Guna*-*Laghu*, *Ruksha*, *Veerya*-*Ushna* *Vipaka* -*Katu*, *Doshagnata*- *Kaphavatashamak*

### *Karyakarana meemamsa* <sup>[27]</sup>

*Palash* is pungent (*katu*), bitter (*tikta*) and astringent (*kashay*) in taste (*Rasa*), pungent in the post digestive effect (*vipaka*) and has hot (*ushna*) potency (*virya*). It alleviates *kapha* and *vata doshas*, but aggravates the *pitta doshas*. The flowers of *Palash* are bitter, pungent and astringent in test, sweet in the post digestive effect and have cold potency. So it alleviates *pitta* and *kapha dosha* and *vata doshas*.

### Formulations and preparations <sup>[28]</sup>

*Krimikuthar rasa*, *Mahanarayan taila*, *Janam ghutti*, *Palashbijadi churna*, *Palashkshara ghrita* *Kunkumadi Taila*

**Doses** <sup>[29]</sup>

Decoction (bark)- 50-100ml, Juice (leaf)-10-20ml, Flower powder- 3-6gm, Gum -1-3gm, Seed powder - 3-6gm

**DISCUSSION**

*Palash* is important medicinal plant. Review on *Palash* from various texts reveals the uses of it since *Vedic* period. Its literature is found abundantly in *Samhitas*, *nighantus* and modern text. Properties of *Palash* flowers are different from that of bark, root, leaves and gum of *Palash*. *Tikta rasa* is predominant rasa in flowers and *katu rasa* is predominant in bark, root, leaves and gum. Flowers are sheet in nature while bark, root, leaves and gum are *ushna* in nature. But Narahari is the only author who mentions that flowers of *Palash* are *ushna* in nature and also mentioned it as *Kushthghna*.

**CONCLUSION**

*Palash (Butea monosperma Lamk.Taub)* is an important medicinal plant which is mentioned since *Vedic* period. In present review an attempt was made to gather information of *palash* through *Vedas*, *Samhitas* and *Nighantus*. So that further will on it to check its efficacy.

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**Table 1: Palash in Charak Samhita**

Referances	Adhyaya/Shlok	Rogaghnata
<i>Siddhi sthana</i>	3/44-45	<i>Yonidosh</i>
<i>Chikitsa sthana</i>	5/173	<i>Raktagulma</i>
<i>Chikitsa sthana</i>	19/59-60	<i>Atisar</i>
<i>Chikitsa sthana</i>	9/122	<i>Arsha</i>
<i>Sutra sthana</i>	3/16	<i>Kushtha</i>

**Table2: Palash in Sushrut Samhita**

Referances	Adhyaya/shlok	Rogaghnata
<i>Uttara tantra</i>	10/9	<i>Pittabhishanda</i>
<i>Chikitasa sthana</i>	5/18	<i>Apatanak</i>
<i>Chikitasa sthana</i>	20/14	<i>Vidarika</i>
<i>Sutra sthana</i>	45 /121	<i>Kapha-pitta prashman</i>
<i>Sutra sthana</i>	46 /196-197	<i>Krumighna</i>
<i>Uttar tantra</i>	42/107	<i>Paitic shool</i>
<i>Uttar tantra</i>	54/25	<i>Krumighna</i>
<i>Uttar tantra</i>	12/50	<i>Raktaabhishanda</i>
<i>Uttar tantra</i>	45/29	<i>Raktapitta</i>

**Table 3: Palash in Nighantu**

Sr. no.	Nighnatu	Useful parts of plant	Varga/shlok	Rogagnata
1	<i>Raj nighnatu</i>	Flowers	<i>Karvirya divarga/ 37</i>	<i>Kushtha</i>
		Beeja	<i>Karvirya divarga/ 37</i>	<i>Pama, Twacharoga</i>
2	<i>Bhavaprakash nighnatu</i>	Flowers	<i>Vatadi varga /50</i>	<i>Krumighna</i>
		Beeja	<i>Vatadi varga/52</i>	<i>Kushtha</i>
3	<i>Dhanvantari nighnatu</i>	Navpatra	<i>Aamradi/151</i>	<i>Pliha, Gulma, Grahani, Arsha</i>
		Beeja	<i>Aamardi /146</i>	<i>Krumighna</i>
4	<i>Shodhal nighnatu</i>	Kanda	<i>Amradi/536</i>	<i>Rasayan</i>
		Beeja	<i>Amradi/536</i>	<i>Krumighna</i>
5	<i>Madanpal nighnatu</i>	Flowers	<i>Vatadi varga/40</i>	<i>Grahi</i>
		Beeja	<i>Vatadi varga/40</i>	<i>Krumighna</i>

**Figure no.1: Palash plant****Figure no.2: Flowers of Pita and Rakta Palash**

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