

A BRIEF REVIEW ON MEDICINAL PROPERTY OF VASA (*ADHATODA VASICA* LINN NEES) FROM *KOSHA* AND *NIGHANTUS*

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ABSTRACT

Vasa (*Adhatoda vasica* Linn. Nees) is a well-known herb in indigenous systems of medicine for its beneficial effects, particularly in bronchitis. *Vasa* leaves, bark, the root bark, the fruit and flowers are useful in the removal of intestinal parasites. *Vasa* herb is used for treating cold, cough, chronic bronchitis and Asthma. It is believed that at the end of each *Samhita* and *Nighantu* was there. In this work a *Nighantu* of *Sushruta* named *Sausruta Nighantu* and another by *Vagbhata* the *Astanga Nighantu* are discussed. The present work aims to discuss 'Vasa' in various *Nighantus* as manuscripts or just as evidence - in a chronological order. Which is important herbal drug in various aspect like, *Albizia lebeck Benth* has also been used successfully by some Ayurvedic practitioners for *Svasa & Kasa* (Respiratory diseases), *Raktapitta* (Haemoptysis), *Jvara* (Fever), *Kustha* (Skin Diseases), *Chardi* (Anti vomiting) etc. Due to multiple uses demand of *Adhatoda vasica* Linn.Nees is so high. So, proper agro technique and other technology are required to fullfil the demand.

Keywords: *Vasa*, *Ayurveda*, *Nighantu*, *Kosha*, *Samhita*.

INTRODUCTION

Adhatoda vasica Linn Nees belonging to family Acanthaceae, commonly known as *Adosa*, is a small, evergreen shrub found many regions of India and throughout the world, with a multitude of uses in traditional Ayurveda. *Vasica* is most well-known for its effectiveness in treating respiratory conditions. The leaves of *Vasica* are shows stimulant effect on the respiratory system. *Vasica* shows an antispasmodic and expectorant effect, and has been used for centuries with much success to treat asthma, chronic bronchitis, and other respiratory conditions. The powdered of herb, boiled with sesame oil, is used to heal ear infections and arrest bleeding. Boiled leaves are used to treat

rheumatic pain, and to relieve the pain of urinary tract infections. It is also believed to have abortifacient properties. It is used in some parts of India to stimulate uterine contractions, thus speeding childbirth¹.

Vernacular names

Hindi: *Adosa, adalsa, vasaka*

Sanskrit: *Amalaka, bashika,*

Bengali: *Basak*

Tamil: *Adatodai*

Marathi: *Vasuka*

Telugu: *Adasaram*

Malayalam: *Ata-lotakam*

Adhatoda vasica Nees belongs to the medicinal family Acanthaceae. It is an evergreen shrub of

1-3 feet in height with many long opposite branches, leaves are large and lance-shaped. Stem herbaceous above and woody below. Leaves opposite and ex-stipulate. Flower spikes or panicles, small irregular zygomorphic, bisexual, and hypogynous². It has capsular four seeded fruits.

The flowers are either white or purple in colour. Its trade name *Vasaka* is based on Sanskrit name³. Inflorescences in axillary spicate cymes, densely flowered; peduncles short; bracts broadly ovate, foliaceous. The leaves, flowers, fruit and roots are extensively used for treating cold cough, whooping cough, chronic bronchitis and asthma, as sedative, expectorant and antispasmodic⁴.

Earlier *Nighantus* were limited to explain the synonyms only. After some time the description of properties, action and indications are also included in the *Nighantu* along with synonyms. The *Nighantu* literature is one of the important aspects in the study of Ayurveda and especially in the subject of *Dravyaguna Vijnana*. The *Nighantu* literature is also as ancient as Ayurveda. Much importance has not been given to the study of *Nighantu*. The ancient *Nighantus* were actually like *Kosa*, containing the synonyms of *Dravya*. Later on, the drugs were given the description of properties, actions and their uses. In true sense the *Nighantu* means collection of words, synonyms and the names of the medicinal substances. Ram avatar Sharma in his introduction to *Kalpadrū Kosa* of Kesava uses the term *Nighantu* for the glossaries connected with *Ayurveda*. To understand precisely what is aimed at these glossaries are called as '*Ayurveda Nighantu*'. The *Nighantu* may be defined as a glossary containing synonymous groups, the names of the drugs, plants, animals, miner-

als or anything that is administered either as food or medicine to the human body. *Vasa* (*Adhatoda vasica* Linn.Nees) is explained in almost all the important *Nighantus* except *Nighantu Aadarsh*, with a variety of synonyms and Guna-karmas.

Amarkosha (5th Cent. A.D.)

This book is the compilation done by Amar Singh. In this book total subject was divided into 3 parts. First and second parts include 10 chapters each and third part comprises of 5 chapters. The total subject was narrated with synonyms. *Vasa* has been mentioned in the *Vanausadhi Varga*. Following synonyms are mentioned here i.e, *Vasika*, *vaidhyamata*, *Singhi*, *Vrish*, *Singhasya*, *Vasak*, *Vajidanta* is given⁵.

Sausruta nighantu: (6th Cent. A.D.)

Several synonyms of *Vasa* i.e, *Aatrushak*, *Vrish*, *Singhamukhi*, have been mentioned and indicated *vasa* in *Raktapitta*⁶.

Ashtanga nighantu: (8th Cent. A.D.)

In this *Nighantu*, *Acharya Vahata* has described maximum group of drugs on the basis of classification of *Ashtanga Sangraha* and *Astanga Hridaya*. In addition, some drugs are also mentioned in *Viprakirna varga*. In this *Nighantu* *Vasa* has been described in *Shyamadi & Virtaruadi gana*. Following synonyms are mentioned here i.e., *Singhasya*, *Vrish*, *Atrushak*⁷.

Paryayratnamala (9th Cent. A.D.)

Vasa have not been mentioned in this *Nighantu*.

Dhanvantari nighantu: (10th - 13th Cent. A.D.)

In the beginning of *Nighantu*, author pays homage to lord *Dhanawantari* and again he mentions its name as *Dravyavali*. At the end of *Dravyavali* author desires to describe the drugs of *Dravyavali* with their synonyms

and after that he has described their properties and actions along with synonyms. In this *Nighantu* Vasa has been described in 'Guduchyadi Varga'. Following synonyms are mentioned here i.e., *Singhaparni*, *Singhika*, *Atrushak*, *Bhisagmata*, *Singhamukhi*. Along with synonyms *Tikta* and *Shita guna* of vasa with *Kushthagha* (skin disorder), *Kasahara* (respiratory diseases), *Jvarhara* (antipyretic), *Chardighna* (antivomiting) actions are described⁸.

Sodhala nighantu: (12th Cent. A.D.)

This *Nighantu* was composed by *Sodhala* in two parts named as *Namasangraha* dealing with synonyms and *Gunasangraha* dealing with properties and actions. In *Guduchyadi varga* of *Sodhala nighantu* synonyms of 'Vasa' i.e. *Singhiparni*, *Vrish*, *Singhika*, *Atrushak*, *Bhisagmata*, *Singhmukhi*, *Svetamukh*, *Asvadant*, have been given as its synonyms. *Vasa* is indicated in *Mutrarakata*⁹.

Hridayadipaka nighantu: (13th Cent. A.D.)

The author of this work is *Bopadeva* son of *Keshava*. The subject matter of this work is well divided into eight *Vargas*. It follows metric style of *Paryaya ratnamala* of *Madhava*. In this *Nighantu* Vasa has been mentioned in *Kapha-pittaghna varga*¹⁰.

Abhidhanaratnamala (Sadrasa Nighantu) (13th Cent. A.D.)

In *Abhidhanratnamala* synonyms of *Vasa* are described in '*Tikta dravya skandha*' Following synonyms are mentioned here *Vasa*, *Vrsha*, *Snghimukhi*, *Bhishagmata*, *Aatrushak*¹¹.

Madhava-dravyaguna: (13th Cent. A.D.)

In *Madhava dravyaguna* Vasa is described in *Vividh-ushadi varga*. Here *Vasa* is used in the treatment of *Kasa*, *Svaravikar*, *Rakta-pitta*, *kaphaj-vikara*¹².

Madanpala nighantu: (14th Cent. A.D.)

Vasa has been mentioned in "*Abhyadi varga*". *Madanapala* has included following synonyms of *Vasa*: *Vrisha*, *Singhika*, *Aatrushaka*, *Bhishagmata*, *Singhimukhi*, are given as its synonyms. Its property is *Kaphavatahara* and indicated in *Svasa & kasa* (respiratory diseases), *Jvara* (fever), *Chardi* (vomiting), *Meha* (diabetes), *Kustha* (skin diseases)¹³.

Kaiyadev nighantu: (Pathyapathya Vibodhaka) (15th Cent. A.D.)

In this *Nighantu* 'Vasa' is described in "*Aushadhi Varga*" by their different synonyms some new synonyms are also given here these are as *Shatavalli matraka*, *Vajidantaka*. Regarding its properties it has been said as *Shita* in *Virya*, *Tikta* and *Kashaya* rasa. The following karma of vasa has been enumerated: *Svasa & kasa* (respiratory diseases), *Jvara* (fever), *Chardi* (vomiting), *Meha* (diabetes), *Kustha* (skin diseases), *Kshaya* (tuberculosis)¹⁴.

Bhavaprakasa nighantu:(16th Cent. A.D.)

This book is written by *Bhavamishra* who is an important landmark in the history of Indian Medicine. He stands at the junction of the medieval and modern periods which is the turning point for its future course and also because of the fact that he revived the style of *Samhitas* and contributed a good deal to various aspects of Ayurveda by adding new ideas and drugs. *Vasa* has been present in *Guduchyadi varga* in this *Nighantu* further Different Synonyms i.e, *Vajidantaka*, *Aatrushaka*, *Vrisha*, *Vrisha* are mention and it is indicated in *Svasa & kasa* (respiratory diseases), *Jvara* (fever), *Chardi*(vomiting), *Meha* (diabetes), *Kustha* (skin diseases)¹⁵.

Gunaratnamala: (16th Cent. A.D.)

In *Gunaratnamala* of Bhavamishra 'Aarusha' word has been used in place of *Vasa* and its Guna karma along with characteristic features of *Vasa* are described as *Shita Virya, Tikta, Kashaya; rasa, Laghu; guna*, and indicated in *Kaphpittarakatanashak* and mentioned in the treatment of *Svasa & kasa (respiratory diseases), Jvara (fever), Chardi (vomiting), Meha (diabetes), Kustha (skin diseases), Kshaya (tuberculosis)*¹⁶.

Rajanighantu: (Nighantu Raja, Abhidhana chudamani) (17th Cent. A.D.)

This book is written by Narhari Pandit, who has given first place to Dravyaguna in *As-tanga Ayurveda*. This book is particularly based on the *Dhanwantari nighantu*. The subject matter has been divided into 23 chapters. *Vasa* is indicated in "*Shatahavadi varga*". It possesses *Tikta* and *Katu rasa; Shita virya*. In this *Nighantu* Sixteen synonyms of '*Vasa*' are mentioned. This is useful in Rakta-pittaj disorders. Synonyms of *Vasa* mentioned in *Raja nighantu* i.e, *vasaka, Singhika, Vasa, Bhisagmata, Vasadani, Aatrushaka, Singhimukhi, Singhi, Kanthorvi, Vrish, Shitparni, Vaajidanta, Naasa, Panchmukhi, Singhiparni, Mrigendrani*¹⁷.

Adhunika kala

'Shirish' is explained in text books of modern periods such as *Dravya guna vigyan* by Dr P. V Sharma, *Priya nighantu, Saligrama nighantu, Ayurvedic materia medica, Wealth of India* and other books written by recent Acharyas, which provide information about its habit, habitat, morphology, chemical composition etc

Nighantu Adarsa: (20th Cent. A.D.)

This book was published in Gujarat, its author, is *Vaidya Bapalaji* who is the authoritative person of 20th century for identification of *Ayurvedic* plants. He has mentioned

all the relevant materials from different *Ayurvedic* texts as well as modern medical and botanical works. In *Adarsa nighantu* '*Vasa*' has not been mentioned.

Priya Nighantu: (20th Cent. A.D.)

Acharya Priyavrata Sharma in his book *Priya Nighantu* has described '*Vasa*' in *Shatpushpadi Varga*. Its properties are *Tikta rasa; Laghu guna; and Shita virya*; and *Kaphapittahara* in karma. It is prescribed to cure *Kasa & Svasa (respiratory diseases), Raktapitta (Haemoptysis) Kshaya (tuberculosis) and Kustha (skin diseases)*¹⁸.

Puspayurveda: (20th Cent. A.D.)

In *Pushpa-Ayurveda* there is no reference was found regarding *Vasa*¹⁹.

DISCUSSION

In rural India, 70 percent of the population is dependent on the traditional system of medicine, it is essential to intensify the study of medicinal plants. History of drug can be studied under *Vaidic kala, Upanishad kala, Purana kala, Samhita kala, Nighantu kala and Adhunika kala. Vasa (Adhatoda vasica* Linn. Nees) is a popular tree, which is used by traditional practitioner to cure various ailments. Present study revealed that by the help of literature i.e. *Kosha* and *Nighantus* we will reach to medicine very easily and take the benefit by the traditional medicines. The *Nighantus* generally were coined using a therapeutic text. Authors used the prevailing and popular texts of their time and region as basis to write *Nighantus*. This explains the emergence of more than one *Nighantu* during one period. Further, two different *Nighantus* are seen having groups with same name but have kept different substances under them. This has happened due to the different rationale used in grouping of the substances. This offers a tremendous

scope for research in order to explore the therapeutic application of a substance in different regions and era, in the same manner *Vasa* (*Adhatoda vasica* Linn. Nees) was also a popular drug at that time. It has tremendous effect on different diseases viz. Svasa & Kasa (Respiratory diseases), Raktapitta (Haemoptysis), Jvara (Fever), Kustha (Skin Diseases), Meha (Diabetes mellitus) etc.

CONCLUSION

Vasa is a well-known herb in indigenous systems of medicine for its beneficial effects, particularly in bronchitis. A unique herb that helps support the bronchial function with bronchodilatory, expectorant and mucolytic properties, the leaves, bark, root, fruit, and the flowers of *Vasaka* tree also help in removing intestinal parasites. The present review on *Vasa* of different *Nighantus* can be useful to know about the different formulations of *Vasa* in which different parts of this plant is used. By this way we can use *Vasa* in the treatment of different diseases. Most of the *Nighantus* have mentioned *Vasa* has good *Kushthagna* (skin disorder), *Pramehaghna* (antidiabetic) *Kasahara* & *Svasahara* (respiratory diseases), *Jvarhara* (Antipyretic), *Chardighna* (anti-vomiting) properties. A detailed clinical study is required to understand the mode of action of this drugs and their efficacy.

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