



**International Journal of Biology, Pharmacy  
and Allied Sciences (IJBPAS)**  
'A Bridge Between Laboratory and Reader'

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## GLIMPSE INTO MADHAVA'S DRAVYAGUNA: AN OVERVIEW

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Received 16<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2023; Revised 18<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2023; Accepted 27<sup>th</sup> May 2024; Available online 1<sup>st</sup> March 2025

<https://doi.org/10.31032/IJBPAS/2025/14.3.8854>

### ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an ancient system of medicine that originated in India. In the context of Ayurveda, a *Nighantu* refers to a classical Ayurvedic lexicon or dictionary that focuses on botanical and medicinal terms. These texts provide extensive information about plants, their properties, and their uses in Ayurvedic medicine. Several ancient Ayurvedic texts are classified as *Nighantu*, and they vary in their content and focus. *Madhava Dravyaguna* is one such available lexicon in the era of 1250 cent. A.D. This lexicon comes under the Medieval period which is also known as *Nighantu Kala*. It contains 29 *Vargas*. Some of the peculiar *Vargas* are mentioned in this text. *Shreshtha Varga* is a remarkable contribution by *Madhava Dravyaguna*. Life style diseases are the result of an ill-relationship of people with their environment. Diet plays an inevitable role in human health and disease prevention. Poor eating habits and food choices greatly increase the risk of lifestyle Diseases. In Ayurveda, *Acharyas* has mentioned the words like – *Shreshtha*, *Uttama*, *Para*, *Pathya*, *Hitam*, *Satmya*, *Pravara*, *Sadapathya*, *Satmikrut*, *Prasadana* etc. These all words indicate importance of *Dravyas* in food habits as well. One such concept is *Shreshtha Varga* of *Madhava Dravyaguna*. This article emphasizes mainly on distinctive feature of *Madhava Dravyaguna*.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, Lexicon, *Madhava Dravyaguna*, *Shreshtha*, Life style diseases

## INTRODUCTION:

### a. Nighantu/Lexicon:

A lexicon is a dictionary or a collection of words and phrases that are specific to a particular language, field of study, or domain of knowledge. It serves as a reference or resource for understanding the meaning, pronunciation, and usage of words. It is a book containing an alphabetical arrangement of the words in a language and their definitions [1].

Lexicons can vary in size and scope, from comprehensive dictionaries that cover the entire vocabulary of a language to specialized lexicons that focus on a specific subject area, such as a medical lexicon, legal lexicon, or a lexicon of slang.

In linguistics, a lexicon is a fundamental component of a person's mental representation of language. It includes not only words but also information about their grammatical properties, meanings, and associations with other words. The lexicon is where individuals store their knowledge of vocabulary and language rules, enabling them to comprehend and produce speech and text [2].

In summary, a lexicon is a structured collection of words and their associated information, often used for reference and understanding within the context of language and communication.

"Nighantu" is a term from Indian traditional medicine and Ayurveda. In Ayurveda, the *Nighantu* refers to a category of ancient texts or compilations that serve as botanical dictionaries or encyclopaedias of medicinal plants and herbs. These texts provide detailed information about various plants, their properties, and their uses in Ayurvedic medicine.

*Nighantus* are important references for Ayurvedic practitioners and herbalists as they contain information about the therapeutic properties, medicinal qualities, and preparation methods for herbal remedies. They often include descriptions of the taste, potency, and effects of each plant, making them valuable resources for formulating Ayurvedic treatments [3].

There are several Nighantus, each with its own unique focus and content. These texts have been used for centuries to guide the practice of Ayurvedic medicine and continue to play a significant role in traditional Indian healthcare systems.

### b. Classification of Nighantu [4]

*Nighantu* are classified into –

1. Ancient period – up to 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD
2. Medieval period (*Nighantu Kala*) – 8<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Century AD
3. Modern Period – From 16<sup>th</sup> Century AD

S. No.	NIGHANTU	AUTHOR	DATE
1.	<i>Madhava Dravyaguna</i>	<i>Madhava</i>	1250 Cent. AD

**c. *Madhava Dravyaguna*:**

One of the important *Nighantu* and written by *Madhava*, son of *Chakradatta* and grandson of *Shrikanthadatta*. Some of the descriptive catalogue of Sanskrit located in different libraries of the Banaras Hindu University. In that, it has recorded a manuscript of *Madhava's Dravyaguna* (Sl, No. 5895; Accn. No. B3773) located in the Bharatendu collections of the Bharat Kala Bhavan of this University.

**NATURE OF THE MANUSCRIPT**

[5]

Size – 27.5×9.8

Folios – 71

Script – Devanagari

Condition – Medium

**CONTENT AND THE PLAN OF THE WORK**

Going through the inclusion materials of the text is to be composed in a very precise form (neither too large nor small) consisting whole of the materials related with plant Materia Medica. On this background the text is divided into the following 29 *vargas* [6].

**Table 1: Name of the Varga and Total number of *Shlokas* mentioned in *Madhava Dravyaguna***

S. No.	Name of the <i>Varga</i>	Total number of <i>Shlokas</i>
1.	<i>Vividhausadhi Varga</i>	177
2.	<i>Lavana Varga</i>	13
3.	<i>Ikshu Varga</i>	21
4.	<i>Madhu Varga</i>	15
5.	<i>Kshira Varga</i>	24
6.	<i>Dadhi Varga</i>	20
7.	<i>Takra Varga</i>	19
8.	<i>Navanita Varga</i>	03
9.	<i>Ghruta Varga</i>	13
10.	<i>Taila Varga</i>	23
11.	<i>Sneha Varga</i>	04
12.	<i>Madya Varga</i>	31
13.	<i>Kanjika Varga</i>	11
14.	<i>Mutra Varga</i>	12
15.	<i>Toya Varga</i>	55
16.	<i>Shali Varga</i>	11
17.	<i>Kudhanya Varga</i>	07
18.	<i>Shimbi Dhanya Varga</i>	19
19.	<i>Mamsa Varga</i>	40
20.	<i>Matsya Varga</i>	15
21.	<i>Phala Varga</i>	67
22.	<i>Shaka Varga</i>	86
23.	<i>Srestha Varga</i>	08
24.	<i>Rasa Varga</i>	06
25.	<i>Manda Varga</i>	11
26.	<i>Anna Varga</i>	13
27.	<i>Pana-Bhakshya Varga</i>	76
28.	<i>Anupana Vidhi</i>	24
29.	<i>Prakirna Varga (Swastha Vritta)</i>	102
	<b>Total number of <i>Shlokas</i></b>	<b>866</b>

In this way, the classification and arrangement of the subject matter in *Madhav's Dravyaguna* is much more exhaustive than in any other *Nighantu*. For this, he seems to have followed closely the *Shusruta Samhita*. *Shusruta* has divided the subject matter into two broad heads – 1. *Drava Dravya* (Liquids or Drinks) and 2. *Annapana vidhi* (food). *Madhava* has not used these words but practically adopted the same arrangements except that he added in the beginning a chapter on medicinal substances (*Vividhausadhi Varga*) on the line of *Vagbhata*. *Lavana Varga* has got the second place in *Madhava's work* along with *Drava Dravyas* while in *Shrusruta* it is in the Chapter of *Anna-Pana*. Some categories have been expanded by *Madhava* making a separate chapter. Such as he has given a separate chapter as '*Sneha Varga*' apart from the chapters on *Ghruta* and *Taila*. Similarly, *Kanjika Varga* and *Matsya Varga* have been described in addition to *Madya Varga* and *Mamsa Varga* respectively. The topic food preparations has been divided into three chapters by *Madhava* as *Manda Varga*, *Anna Varga* and *Pana-Bhakshya Varga*. Some new chapters as *Rasa Varga* and *Srestha Varga* have been added.

In arrangement of drugs in certain *Ganas*, *Shrusruta* had their common therapeutic effect in view. Similarly, *Madhava* also seems to have some common action of drugs in view and has made it one of the bases of

the arrangement of the drugs. He has started the first chapter with *Haritaki* and as this is 'Sara' (purgative) action. He has described other drugs like *Trivrita*, *Rajavrksa*, *Katuka*, *Trayamana*, *Yavasa* in continuation. Similarly, *Patha*, *Kutaja*, *Indrayava*, *Hribera*, *Musta*, *Ativisha* and *Bilwa* have been described in continuation. All these drugs have *Grahi* action. Other groups in view were *Virechana*, *Dipana*, *Rochana*, *Shothahara*, *Vatahara*, *Vrishya*, *Shonitasthapana*, *Medhya* and *Kushthaghna*. *Gandha Dravyas* have been dealt with at one place subdividing them into *Pittaghna*, *Vataghna* and *Kaphaghna* such as *Chandana*, *Kumkum* and *Karpura* respectively. Drugs efficacious in *Mukharoga*, *Kasa-Swasa* and *Jwara* have been described in the end. After the vegetable drugs, minerals and animal products have been described. In these groups also there is some order in relation to action. For instance, *Suvarana*, *Gairika*, *Tuttha*, *Anjana* etc. have been said as *Chakshusya* and are described in continuation. The chapters end with description of flowers. In *Phala Varga* and *Shaka Varga* also there seems to be some order of Arrangement of drugs. Although the author has nowhere mentioned this fact explicitly.

Apart from *Shrusruta*, the author has closely followed the *Astanga Samgraha* of *Vagabhatta*. Beginning with the

*Vividhausdhi Varga* and ending with *Asya, Jyotsna, Vayu* etc. the work is based on the pattern of *Vagbhata*.

Among his sources, the author mentions *Charaka, Shrusruta, Parasara, Vagbhata, Harischandra, Bhela, Vaideha, Harita* etc. Hence he must have utilised all these works available to him at that time.

Apart from the ancient sources, the author has borrowed copiously from the *Nighantus* of Medieval period particularly the *Shodhala Nighantu*. Short and practical description of drugs given by *Shodhala* might have attracted the author. It may also be possible that *Shodhala* might have followed *Madhava* because the description of *Shodhala* is more developed and a large number of drugs like *Kankustha* etc. described by *Shodhala* are not found in *Madhava's* work. Like *Chakrapani* he has given prominence to dietic substances and has condensed the material regarding drugs in one chapter.

#### AUTHOR AND HIS DATE

As the last verse of the work indicates, it is composed by *Madhava Kavi*. After this there is a sentence which shows that the work is read by *Madhava Mishra* in the year 1509 (Samvat) which comes to 1452 A.D. Perhaps this is about the transcription of the work. Apart from this, there is no any other information about the author [7].

As regards the date of the work, if the year 1452 A.D. as the date of transcription of the

work, the work must be anterior to this. The work has been quoted by *Swami Laksmi Ram* (20<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.) in his notes on *Siddha Bhesaja Manimala* of *Sri Krisna Rama Bhatta*. *Shivadatta Mishra* (17<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.) has quoted the work copiously in his commentary on *Shiva Kosha* which shows the popularity of the work at that time. His son *Krisnadatta* has also quoted the work in his commentary on *Trimalla Bhatta's Dravyaguna Shatashloki*. *Todaranand* or *Ayurvedsaukhya*, which is said to be a work of *Todaramalla*, one of the ministers of Akbar (16<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.) has included the work in his compendium which shows the popularity of the work at that time [8].

*Adhamalla* belonging to 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D. has quoted a portion of the verse from *Madhava's* work though without mentioning its name. The work has been quoted by *Shivadasa Sen* (15<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.). The first author to quote him is *Bopadev* (13-14 Cent. A.D.) in his commentary on *Siddhamantra* [9].

*Dalhana* (12<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.) and *Chakrapani* (11<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.) do not mention this work in their commentaries. But *Sarvananda* (12<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.) in his commentary on *Amarakosa* has quoted a portion of a verse which is found in *Madhava's Dravyaguna*. There are several passages common in *Chakrapani's Dravyaguna Samgraha* and *Madhava's Dravyaguna* [10].

As regards the internal evidences, the following points are to be noted –

1. There is description of *Jayapala* which is also a drug described in medieval source in India.
2. *Vijaya* has been described which is also a drug described in medieval texts.
3. *Opium* has also been described which is found in *Dhanwantari Nighantu* (10-13<sup>th</sup> Cent,A.D.) and onwards.
4. There is no mention of *Yasada* which is found in the texts after 14<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.
5. There is *Sulemani Kharjura* which is found in *Madanapala* and *Bhava Prakasa Nighantu* in later medieval period.

The points 4 and 5 indicate the existence of this work before *Madanapala* (14<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.) who has described the medieval drugs and seems to have borrowed *Sulemani Kharjura* and other descriptions from *Madhava*. A large number of verses in *Madhava's* work tally with those of *Shodhala Nighantu* and *Dravyaguna Samgraha* of *Chakrapani Datta* [11].

#### METHOD OF EDITING [12]

In editing the following steps have been taken –

1. Looking to the orthographical peculiarities, the words have been placed in correct form.

2. Grammatical mistakes here and there have been removed.
3. The text has been corrected on the basis of original sources like *Shrusruta*, *Chakrapani* and *Shodhala*.
4. Attempt has been made to avoid repetition or duplication and in such cases duplicate passages have been given in brackets.

#### SOME PECULIAR VARGAS MENTIONED IN MADHAVA DRAVYAGUNA

1. *Sneha Varga* [13] – among the 4 types of *Sneha*, *Vasa* and *Majja* are explained in this chapter. *Kumbhir* and *Makar vasa* are to be considered as a *Shreshtha* and *Kakmadgu Vasa* & *Karndoshna Vasa* are considered as *Ashreshtha*. Apart from this, *Samanya Lakshana* of *Vasa* and *Majja* are mentioned in this chapter.
2. *Kanjika Varga* [14] – Different preparations of *Kanji* with their properties are explained in this chapter. *Kanji* is basically acts as *Shleshma*, *Pandu* and *Krimihara*. Also it acts as *Mutral* and *Hrudya*. Especially it is best among *Rochana Dravya*.
3. *Kudhanya Varga* [15] – In this chapter, He has explained some of the *Kudhanya* along with their *Guna-Karma* and *Godhuma* is

- considered as a *Shreshtha* and *Pathya Ahara*.
4. *Shimbi Dhanya Varga* [16] – *Mudga, Masura, Makushthaka, Satin, Adhaki, Kulatha, Masha* etc. are explained in this chapter. Types of *Mudga* – *Krishna Mudga, Maha Mudga, Gaura, Harita, Pita, Shweta, Rakta* are mentioned and they are *Laghu* in nature in decreasing number.
5. *Matsya Varga* [17] – Different types of *Matsya* along with their properties are explained and *Rohit Matsya* considered as a *Shreshtha*. At the end of this chapter, Author mentioned *Mruga* and birds are *Uttama*.
6. *Shreshtha Varga* [18] – In this *Varga*, some of the *Shreshtha Dravyas* are mentioned for different groups. They are –

Table 2: *Shreshtha Dravyas* as per the specific *Vargas* mentioned in *Shreshtha Varga* of *Madhava Dravyaguna*

S. No.	VARGA	SHRESHTHA DRAVYAS
1.	<i>Shali Varga</i>	<i>Shastika, Yava, Godhuma, Lohita Shali, Mudga, Aadhaki, Masura</i>
2.	<i>Mamsa Varga</i>	<i>Ena, Kuranga, Harina, Titira, Lava, Mayura, Varmi, Kurma</i>
3.	<i>Phala Varga</i>	<i>Dadima, Amalaka, Draksha, Kharjura, Parushaka, Rajadan, Matulunga</i>
4.	<i>Shaka Varga</i>	<i>Chanчу, Satin, Vastuka, Katuveera, Mulaka, Potika, Mandukaparni, Jivanti</i>
5.	<i>Kshira</i>	<i>Gavya Kshira</i>
6.	<i>Ghruta</i>	<i>Go Ghruta</i>
7.	<i>Madhura Rasa</i>	<i>Ghruta</i>
8.	<i>Amla Rasa</i>	<i>Amalaki, Dadima</i>
9.	<i>Lavana Rasa</i>	<i>Saindhava Lavana</i>
10.	<i>Katu Rasa</i>	<i>Pippali, Shunti</i>
11.	<i>Tikta Rasa</i>	<i>Patola, Vartaka</i>
12.	<i>Kashaya Rasa</i>	<i>Madhu, Pugaphala, Parushaka</i>
13.	<i>Ikshuvikara</i>	<i>Sharkara</i>
14.	<i>Pana Varga</i>	<i>Sura, Asava</i>
15.	<i>Dhanya</i>	<i>Parisamvatsara Dhanya</i>
16.	<i>Mamsa</i>	<i>Madhyama Vaya Mamsa</i>
17.	<i>Anna</i>	<i>Aparyushit Anna</i>
18.	<i>Phala</i>	<i>Paryagatam</i>
19.	<i>Shaka</i>	<i>Ashuska, Taruna, Nava</i>

7. *Rasa Varga* [19] – *Rasa Varga* is one of the unique *Varga* mentioned in *Madhava Dravyaguna* which are not found in other *Nighantu*'s. In this *Varga*, *Madhura, Amla, Lavana, Katu, Tikta* and *Kashaya Rasa* with their *Guna-Karma* are explained.
8. *Manda Varga* [20] – Three types of *Manda* are explained in this *Varga*. They are- 1. *Lajabhrista Manda* 2. *Lajaabhrista Manda* 3. *Tandula Manda*. *Laja Manda* is considered as a *Pathya*. Apart from this, properties

of the each types of *Manda* has explained.

9. *Anna Varga* [21] – In this chapter, *Guna-Karma* of *Manda*, *Peya*, *Vilepi*, *Yavagu* are explained. *Ati Ushna Anna* is *Balahanikar*, *Shita* and *Shuska Anna* is *Durjara* and *Atiklinna Anna* is *Glanikara*.
10. *Pana Bhakshya Varga* [22] – As the name suggest of this chapter, it is divided into two parts: 1. *Pana* & 2. *Bhakshya*. Liquid preparations with their types and properties are explained under the *Pana*. Solid preparations along with their types and properties are explained under the *Bhakshya*.

## DISCUSSION

*Madhava Dravyaguna* is one of the *Nighantu* written by *Madhava* and belongs to Medieval period. In Ayurveda, one of the text by name *Madhava Nidana* related to *Rugvinischaya* which is written by *Madhava*. Some of the scholars have identified him as a same person who written *Madhava Dravyaguna*. But apart from this, a work known as *Dravyaguna* of *Madhava* has been quoted in some commentaries which shows that there was another independent work on Indian Materia Medica by *Madhava*. It contains 29 *Vargas* and 866 total number of *Shlokas*.

By looking to the arrangements of the *Vargas*, it seems to follow either some of the

*Samhita* or *Nighantu*. Apart from this, he has given some specific contribution which are not found in other *Nighantu*. He has explained *Sneha Varga* separately apart from the *Ghritha* and *Taila Varga*. *Vasa* and *Majja* are included in this chapter. One of the peculiar *Varga* is *Shreshtha Varga* in *Madhava Dravyaguna*. *Shreshtha Varga* of *Madhava Dravyaguna* is almost similar to *Shreshtha Varga* mentioned in *Shodhala Nighantu*. In this chapter, he has highlighted some of the *Shreshtha Dravyas* in particular *Varga*. Ex. *Amalaki* in *Phala Varga*. As it is said in many classics of Ayurveda, it is having *Rasayana*, *Vayasthapana* etc. properties and it is also rich with Vitamin C. Hence, it is beneficial and considered as a *Shreshtha*. *Purana Dhanya* is considered as a *Shreshtha*. As per the *Shad Rasa*, *Shreshtha Dravyas* are explained.

Life style diseases are the result of an ill-relationship of people with their environment. Diet plays an inevitable role in human health and disease prevention. On the other hand, eating habits can be modified, and therefore are a promising target for lifestyle interventions, which can influence future health [23]. Human body is said to be the bio-product of food. *Ahara* plays vital role in healthy and diseased condition. So, implementation of *Shreshtha Varga* in food habits will be more beneficial.

**CONCLUSION**

*Madhava Dravyaguna* or lexicon has a wonderful space in the Medieval period. This *Nighantu* contains 29 *Vargas* and 866 *Shlokas*. Author might follow *Shushruta Samhita* or any other *Nighantu*. Unique contribution by *Madhava* has explained in this *Nighantu* as a some of the peculiar *Vargas*. *Shreshtha Varga* is one of the great contributions in the *Madhava Dravyaguna* since one can explore and use *Shreshtha Dravyas* mentioned in the *Vargas* to overcome some life style diseases.

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