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## UNVEILING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AHAROKTA SHRESHTA VARGA: SHODHALA NIGHANTU PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

The 'Shodhala Nighantu,' authored by Acharya Shodhala in the 12th century AD. Born to Vaidya Nandana, a disciple of Sanghadayalu, Shodhala belonged to the brahmana community with Vatsa gotra, hailing from the Rayakavala tradition prevalent in Gujarat. This dedicated scholar, identified as a Jyotisha Sasastri, or astrological expert, expressed his devotion to Bhanu (Surya). Notably, his name is etched in a *Tamrapatra* (copper plate inscription) dating back to the rule of Bhimadeva II in 1256 AD. The unique dual – part presentation, encompassing Namasangraha for Nomenclature and Gunasangraha for pharmacotherapeutics. Food plays a crucial role in both health and disease. *Ahara* is a fundamental component within the three supporting pillars of life in *Ayurveda*. Its consumption should adhere to appropriate *matra* (quantity) and be contingent upon the strength of *agni* (digestive fire) and individual *bala* (strength). Emphasizing the significance of mindful eating, Ayurveda underscores the need to align dietary choices with the robustness of *agni* and overall bodily strength, recognizing *ahara's* pivotal role within the framework of optimal well-being. Any disease can be comprehensively cured without any medicine by just following *pathya ahara* or wholesome food whereas even hundreds of medicines and formulations cannot cure a disease in the absence of a planned wholesome regimen of diet. Ayurveda emphasizes that proper food choices and eating habits are crucial for maintaining balance in the body and mind. Certain disease condition occurring to one who is habituated to *viruddhasana* (incompatible food), *adhyasana* (eating food before the digestion of prior food) and *ajirna* (indigestion). Shrestha is

denoted by *pravara*, *Shrestha*, *uttamam*, *hanthi*, *hitham*, *jith*, *varjith*, *nashanam*, *varjayeth*, *vaha*, *poojitham*, *vaha*, *nashanam*, *varjitha*, *parivarjitham*, *nuth*, etc. After Shodhala Nighantu other Nighantukara's followed the style. To overcome on disease condition, one has to strictly follow the classical rules and regulations related to *Ahara* and *Vihara*. Present article emphasized Shreshta *ahara* explained in Shodhala Nighantu.

**Keywords:** *Shodhala, Ahara, Varga, Sreshtam, Param, life style disorders*

## INTRODUCTION:

'A physician without knowledge of Nighantu, a scholar without the knowledge of grammar, and a soldier without knowledge of weapons are ridiculed by people.' [1]

'Shodhala Nighantu' was composed by Acharya Shodhala in 12th century AD. Shodhala was born as the son of Vaidya Nandana, a disciple of Sanghadayalu, was a brahmana of vatsa gotra, belonging to a traditional family of Rayakavala, mostly prominent in Gujarat. He was a devotee of Bhanu (Surya). He himself introduced as Jyotisha sasastri (scholar of astrology). His name is inscribed in a Tamrapatra (copper plate inscription) during the reign of Bhimadeva II (1256 AD).

The Nighantu commence with a salutation for lord Ganesha and text opens with offering prayer (Suryaradhana) to Lord Sun [2]. The framing of this Nighantu is by compiling all the names of drugs as quintessence of drugs terminology.

**Significance Specialities and Contribution:** The unique way of compilation, presentation and introduction of subject, topic and drugs made this

Nighantu stand out from other works. The main attribute of this is the presentation of subject material in two parts (khanda) or section, i.e. Namasangraha and Gunasangraha, dealing with both the nomenclature and pharmacotherapeutic of the drugs [3]. This way of describing the drugs adopted by Shodhala is most practical and helps in understanding both aspects of drugs separately. From the peculiar way of reorienting acquaintance of drugs and reorganising the subject matter, it is evident that Shodhala had drawn up his on plan to preserve the originality and uniqueness of the Nighantu. Creation of new groups (Vargas) like Anekartha and Misraka varga in Namasangraha and 8th varga to 27<sup>th</sup> varga in Gunasangraha added up to this remark [4]. Bifurcation of the pharmacological aspects and nomenclatural material containing synonyms of drug and likewise, taxonomic aspect and the facet of medicinal properties of drugs has created a direct way of accessing the information and gaining knowledge without any intermingling in interest of study. To avoid detail enlistment and plural meaning of drug terms, Shodhala

followed a precise manner to incorporate multi-synonymous drugs by compiling, collating and selecting them, in a separate chapter (varga) [5].

The traces of following the path of fundamentals evolved by expounders of Samhitha, for instance the system of 'Namarupajnana' - developed as most scientific pattern of study of drugs, can also be found in his Nighantu [6]. By recording of regional terminology of drugs besides the Sanskrit terminology of drugs, commonly forming the content of Nighantu treatises in general, Shodhala has made the description of drug more understandable, easy and practicable; it also adds the manifold utility of work containing local or regional names prevalent in the areas of study of plant drugs by Shodhala. This style of Shodhala appears to be quite natural, applied and simple, so that any layman can recognise a source plant (srota) growing and available (or procured) for particular drug (ausadha dravya), and on the other hand, the physician will take help to identify, verify and determine the identity of drug and its plant source, which is generally known by specific local name [7]. Other salient features which are legible in this treatise are the determination of drugs and dietary articles (Ausadha Khadyaahara) by their taste in regard to unaccounted items (or Dravyas), affinity of medicinal properties of products (like gum or latex)

with source plant, production of complications caused by guna of meals (Ahara) in excess, mention of tanucchada (specific costume or garment wear) in various points of hygiene (svasthavrtta), use of Sanskrit and prakrit languages with relaxation of gender in linguistics and other various points and facets of pattern, style and descriptions etc. [8].

Shodhala incorporates drugs from all the sources i.e. botanical, geological and zoological, with predominance of the drugs from vegetable kingdom. The numerical survey of dravyas finds near about 500 in number in the first part named as namasangraha (comprising mainly 7 vargas), while this number goes high if the dravyas (e.g. dhanyas - cereals, paddy etc. and other dravas-liquids etc.) are accounted for [9]. Among the classified groups (Vargas), various groups of drugs (Ausadha Vargas) are named similar to other works of Nighantu, but Laksmanadi varga stands out as a unique contribution of Shodhala, especially for its composition of various uncommon drugs [10].

Lack of physical activity, unhealthy eating, alcohol, stress, sedentary life style, smoking tobacco, which can lead to heart disease, stroke, obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cancer so one should follow healthy diet and regimen to lead a healthy life.

Table 1: Shreshtha dravyas mentioned in Dhanya varga as per Shodhala Nighanthu [11]

Sl. No.	Name of Cereals	Botanical Name	Family
1.	<i>Shastika shali</i>	<i>Oryza sativa</i> Linn.	Poaceae
2.	<i>Yava</i>	<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> Linn.	Poaceae
3.	<i>Godhuma</i>	<i>Triticum aestivum</i> Linn.	Poaceae
4.	<i>Lohita shali</i>	<i>Oryza longistaminata</i> Linn.	Poaceae
5.	<i>Mudga</i>	<i>Phaseolus radiatus</i> Linn.	Fabaceae
6.	<i>Adhaki</i>	<i>Cajanus indicus</i> Linn.	Fabaceae
7.	<i>Masura</i>	<i>Lens culinaris</i> Medik.	Fabaceae

Table 2: Shreshtha dravyas mentioned in Mamsavarga as per Shodhala Nighanthu [12]

Sl. No.	Name of Animals	English Name
1.	<i>Ena</i>	Black deer
2.	<i>Kuranga</i>	A type of bird
3.	<i>Harina</i>	Antelope-deer
4.	<i>Tittira</i>	Partridge
5.	<i>Lava</i>	A type of bird
6.	<i>Mayura</i>	Peacock
7.	<i>Varmi</i>	A type of fish
8.	<i>Kurma</i>	Tortoise

We should show compassion to all the living beings. We must also exercise this while having aahara and vihara. Under the wildlife protection act 1972, certain species, those are in the verge of endanger, are being

protected and killing of these species will result in 3 years imprisonment. Many of the species mentioned above comes under this protection and it is illegal to kill them or include them in our diet [13].

Table 3: Shreshtha dravyas mentioned in Phala varga as per Shodhala Nighanthu [14]

Sl. No.	Name of fruits	Botanical Name	Family
1.	<i>Dadima</i>	<i>Punica granatum</i> Linn.	Punicaceae
2.	<i>Amalaka</i>	<i>Emblica officinalis</i> Gaertn.	Euphorbiaceae
3.	<i>Draksha</i>	<i>Vitis vinifera</i> Linn.	Vitaceae
4.	<i>Parusaka</i>	<i>Grewia asiatica</i> Linn.	Tiliaceae
5.	<i>Rajadana</i>	<i>Buchanania lanzan</i> Spreng.	Anacardiaceae
6.	<i>Matulunga</i>	<i>Citrus medica</i> Linn.	Rutaceae

Table 4: Shreshtha dravyas mentioned in Shaka varga as per Shodhala Nighanthu [15]

Sl. No.	Name of vegetables	Botanical Name	Family
1.	<i>Chuchu</i>	<i>Corchorus aestuans</i> Linn.	Tiliaceae
2.	<i>Satina</i>	<i>Pisum sativum</i> Linn.	Fabaceae
3.	<i>Vastuka</i>	<i>Chenopodium murale</i> Linn.	Chenopodiaceae
4.	<i>Katuveera</i>	<i>Capsicum annum</i> Linn.	Solanaceae
5.	<i>Mulaka</i>	<i>Raphanus sativus</i> Linn.	Brassicaceae
6.	<i>Marshaka</i>	1. <i>Amaranthus blitum</i> Var. <i>oleracea</i> Duthie. 2. <i>Amaranthus gangeticus</i> Linn.	Amaranthaceae
7.	<i>Mandukaparni</i>	<i>Centella asiatica</i> Linn.	Apiaceae
8.	<i>Jivanti</i>	<i>Leptadenia reticulata</i> (Retz.) Wight & Arn.	Asclepiadaceae

Table 5: Shreshtha dravyas mentioned in Shad rasa as per Shodhala Nighanthu [16]

Sl. No.	Rasa	Shreshtha Dravya
1.	<i>Madhura Rasa</i>	<i>Ghruta</i>
2.	<i>Amla Rasa</i>	<i>Dadima &amp; Dhatri</i>
3.	<i>Lavana Rasa</i>	<i>Saindhava Lavana</i>
4.	<i>Katu Rasa</i>	<i>Pippali &amp; Nagara</i>
5.	<i>Tikta Rasa</i>	<i>Patola &amp; Vartaka</i>
6.	<i>Kashaya Rasa</i>	<i>Puga Phala</i>

Table 6: *Shreshtha dravyas* mentioned in miscellaneous as per Shodhala Nighanthu [17]

Sl. No.	Category	Shreshtha Dravya
1.	<i>Kshira &amp; Ghrita</i>	<i>Gavya</i>
2.	<i>Sarkara</i>	<i>Ikshuvikara</i>
3.	<i>Pana</i>	<i>Sura &amp; Asava</i>
4.	<i>Dhanya</i>	<i>Parisamvatsara</i>
5.	<i>Mamsa</i>	<i>MadhyameVaya prani</i>

## DISCUSSION

Shodhala introduces a two-part structure, *namasangraha* and *gunasangraha*, separating nomenclature and pharmaceuticals. Knowledge is a vast ocean scaling it with our limited ability is useless, same goes with *aahara*. We have to be precise while planning our diet. We must include the pertinent nutrient rich foods in our diet. Shodhala clearly classified and mentioned the inevitable *aahara* which we should incorporate in our dietary supplement. Kashyapa emphasizes that nothing compares to the healing power of food, referring to it as *Maha Bhaishjya* (the supreme medicine). He contends that by consuming appropriate food and maintaining a balanced diet, diseases can be cured without the necessity of medicinal intervention or treatment. *Ahara* (food), *Nidra* (sleep) and *Brahmacharya* (celibacy) are the Traya Upastambhas in accordance with *acharya Charaka*. Among the three pillars, Ahara or food is a major supporting

pillar which helps in sustenance of life and maintenance of health.

(*Prana*) life of living being is dependant on *anna* (food) and all creatures of the universe desire food. Food determines various factors such as *varna* (colour), *Sausvrya* (good voice), *Pratibha* (geniuses), *Tusti* (satisfaction), *Bala* (strength), *Prasada* (clarity), *Jivita* (longevity), *Sukha* (happiness), *Pushti*(nourishment), *Medha*(intelligence).

*Pathya* (wholesome regimen) which are (*anapeta*) harmless to (*patha*) dosas and tissues of the body which are moving in the channels and the substance and regimen which are (*manasah priya*) favourable to mind. *Acharya Charaka* mentions the word *pathya* also as synonym of *cikitsa* . This shows if the wholesome food is taken in right time, quantity etc can help to recover from disease condition either alone or with other medications. Diseases due to food will not be manifested in person consuming Hitaahara (wholesome food).

Table 7: *Sreshtha Dravyas / hitatama* (wholesome) mentioned by *Acharya Charaka*

Sr. No.	Dravya (Substance)	Shreshta
1.	<i>Lavana</i>	<i>Saindhava</i>
2.	<i>Sukadhanya</i>	<i>Lohithsali</i>
3.	<i>Samidhanya</i>	<i>Mudga</i>
4.	<i>Jalavarga</i>	<i>Antariksha</i>
5.	<i>Lavana Varga</i>	<i>Saindhava</i>
6.	<i>Shaka Varga</i>	<i>Jivanti Saka</i>
7.	<i>Mrgamamsa</i>	<i>Ena</i>

8.	<i>Paksimamsa</i>	<i>Lava</i>
9.	<i>Bilesayamamsa</i>	<i>Godha</i>
10.	<i>Matsya Varga</i>	<i>Rohitha</i>
11.	<i>Sarpi</i>	<i>Gavyasarpi</i>
12.	<i>Ksheera</i>	<i>Goksheera</i>
13.	<i>Sthavara Sneha</i>	<i>Tila Taila</i>
14.	<i>Anupamrgavasa</i>	<i>Varahavasa</i>
15.	<i>Matsya Vasa</i>	<i>Culukivasa</i>
16.	<i>Jalcara Vihangavasa</i>	<i>Pakahamsa Vasa</i>
17.	<i>Viskira Sakuni Vasa</i>	<i>Kukkuta Vasa</i>
18.	<i>Sakhamedasa</i>	<i>Ajameda</i>
19.	<i>Kanda</i>	<i>Srngavera</i>
20.	<i>Phala</i>	<i>Mrdhivika</i>
21.	<i>Ikshuvikara</i>	<i>Sarkara</i>

In *Acharya Charaka's* view if the wholesome food (*Hita Ahara*) is responsible for *Sukha* (happiness, health), unwholesome food (*Ahita Ahara*) causes *Dukha* (misery, unhappiness).

While consuming *mamsa ahara* we should abide with the ethical consideration towards the animals such as *Mrgamamsa (Ena)*, *Harina* (antelope-deer), *Mayura* (peacock). There are certain laws like wild life protection act 1972 which encompasses the need of protection of wild life species from being endangered and killing of these will invite an imprisonment of 3 years. So, it is illegal to include such food item in our diet in present scenario.

#### CONCLUSION:

Ayurveda is an ancient science of life that emphasizes on maintenance and promotion of health and prevention of disease through various dietary and lifestyle regimens and treatment of disease through various therapeutic measures substantiating the principle "*swasthasya swasthya rakshanam*

"i.e. preserving the health of healthy persons.

Among the three pillars, *Ahara* or food is a major supporting pillar which helps in sustenance of life and maintenance of health. According to *Bhagwatgeeta* by eating pure food, the mind becomes pure. The reverse is also true-people with pure minds prefer pure foods. Therefore, we should be in constant check of what we eat as it has direct effect on our body and mind [18].

*Acharya shodhala* mentioned *shreshtas ahara* that is incorporating highly nutrituous and wholesome food in our diet. So *shreshta ahara* need to be added in day today life to overcome on the disease condition. *Agni* (digestive fire) must be taken into the consideration while consuming all the types of *Shreshta* (wholesome food) because as per *Ayurveda* '*Ati Sarvatra Varjayet*' (one should consume *hita-aahara* as per one's digestive capacity and excessive quantity must be avoided).

In the Kaliyuga (present days) Kala (life-span) is very short so it's very difficult to read all the Samhita's, Nighantu and Granthas (all types classical text books) so its duty of all human beings to adopt the Sara (essence) told by the Acharya's.

Paying due consideration to the quantity and time, a self-controlled man should regularly take such useful food and drinks as are conducive to the internal power of digestion including metabolism. Like an ahithagni, who takes diet conducive to the ower of digestion being aware of the wholesomeness of food and drinks, who resort to meditation of "Brahman" and charity, enjoys bless without any disease during the present as well as future lives.

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