

SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION OF AYURVEDIC TERMINOLOGY

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Abstract

Ayurvedic terminology, deeply rooted in Sanskrit, reveals a rich heritage of systematic classification and etymological significance. This paper investigates the etymological analysis of Ayurvedic terms, highlighting their categorization based on attributes such as usage, inherent qualities, local adaptations, and physical resemblances. It addresses challenges like the ambiguity of synonyms, discrepancies in botanical nomenclature, and the lack of standardization. By emphasizing etymology, the study proposes a structured approach to identify and classify herbs accurately, facilitating their effective application in medicinal formulations. This effort bridges traditional knowledge with modern scientific practices, enhancing the reliability of Ayurveda.

Key Words: Ayurveda, Terminology, Etymology, Botanical Identification, Medicinal Plants

Introduction

Dictionaries play a significant role in any language. Dictionaries assist us to know the meanings of unknown words. The origin of making dictionaries has been rooted in Sanskrit. There are two types of dictionaries in Sanskrit. One type of dictionary contains words, meanings, synonyms, polysemous senses, etymological meanings, and grammatical derivations. It is called *Nighantu*. Limited to words from Vedic literature, this had given an impetus to dictionary-making in India. The second type of dictionary contains words, synonyms, and polysemous senses. This classification goes under the name *kosha*. Amarakosha, Medinikosha, etc., are some of the examples.

In *Ayurveda* also there are numerous dictionaries. But the structure of the entries differs from that of the earlier example. *Ayurveda Nighantus* contains words, synonyms and their description of qualities, and action etc., Etymological analysis of words has been mentioned in a few *Nighantus*. While experimenting with *Ayurvedic* formulas based on theories, there is scope for a lot of confusion as each synonym of Ayurvedic term acquires several botanical names from Latin. Ultimately one cannot decide on what herb should be used and how to identify it. Unfortunately, it seems a good amount of work on standardization is not followed in Indian Pharmacopeia, Due to this factor time, energy and money are being wasted in the realm of *Ayurveda*. Supplying etymological meaning can reduce some percent of ambiguity in this context. *Ayurvedic* botanical terminology is inherently embedded with the scientific description of the plant qualities, structure, etc., in the same way Ayurvedic dictionaries, words are classified into seven categories. Such as रूढि, स्वभाव etc., described in *Ayurvedic* dictionaries. In this paper, I would like to discuss all these aspects to establish that *Ayurveda* has rich information regarding its botanical names.

Etymology

The etymology is called '*Nirukra*' or '*Vyutpatti*' in Sanskrit. At first, the etymology was established to the Vedic terms by distinguished scholar Yaska in his book *Niruktam* and grammatical derivations also had been given. After Yaska the Sanskrit grammarians Panini, Katyayana, and Patanjali had given Etymological Analysis in the way of principles of grammar. Etymology is the study of the history of words their origins, and how their form and meaning have changed over time. For languages with a long-written history. The main feature of etymology is stated in niruktha by yaska as 'अर्थावबोधे पदजातं यथोक्तं तत् निरुक्तम् इति निरुक्तस्यार्थः' so, The Ayurvedic terminology is named by best suited to their physical appearance, habitat in the nature, therapeutic potency or even resemblance to animals and household articles. So, the terminology can be analyzed.

Categories of technical terminology

While naming the drugs, especially those of plant origin, the ancient saints are understood to have often referred to them with the names, that were best suited to their physical appearance, habitat in nature, therapeutic potency, or even resemblance to animals and household articles. Thus, terms like "Kakanasa" (like the nose of a crow) for *Martynia diandra* seeds, "Mandukaparni" (leaf like a frog's leg) for *Centella Asiatica*, etc., were used to refer to plants and plant-based drugs. There might be some science behind naming these herbs intelligently. The philosophy of Ayurvedic terminology and its classification have been described in some Ayurvedic texts. These seven categories are in which all Ayurvedic terms are classified. They are as follows -

नामानि क्वचिदिह रूढितः स्वभावात् देशोक्त्या क्वचन च लाञ्छनोपमानाभ्याम् ।

वीर्येण क्वचिदितराह्वयादिदेशात् द्रव्याणां धृत्वमिति सप्तोद्धोदितानि। (राज निघण्टुः)

रूढि (Usage), स्वभाव (Attitude), देशोक्ति (Local usage), लाञ्छनम् (Out ward signs of things named), उपमानम् (Comparison), वीर्य (Inherent energy), इतराह्वयादिदेशात् (Name of foreign origin) are the Seven kinds of factors. Each kind of factor should be related to any one of the terms. Through these factors we can categorise the terms. Examples for each category as follows-

1. रूढि :- अश्वगन्धा is the Example. It smells like a a horse' smell. By the usage, it got the name अश्वगन्धा ।
2. स्वभाव :- गोक्षुर is the example. It bothers cows by its attitude it is called गोक्षुर ।
3. देशोक्ति :- एलवालुक is the example. It has different names in various places.
4. लाञ्छनम् :- गोजिह्वा is the example. The word meaning of this is entirely different. Only by Outward signs of things, it can be known.
5. उपमानम् :- मण्डूकपर्णी is the example. Its leaf looks like a frog's leg. So, it is called as मण्डूकपर्णी ।
6. वीर्य :- पुत्रंजीव is the example. the herb has Inherent energy(वीर्य) to cause to produce male progeny. So, it is called as पुत्रंजीव ।
7. इतराह्वयादिदेशात् :- नेपालि निम्बा is the example.

Observation & Problems

Ayurvedic terminology has controversy on synonyms and ambiguity on various botanical names. While referring to different dictionaries and articles, three types of problems are observed as-

1. Each term has more than a dozen Synonyms.
For reference, All Synonyms of Ayurvedic terms as mentioned in dictionaries.
2. Any botanical name verbally doesn't Indicate the Ayurvedic term.
For Instance, Mandukaparni (leaf like a frog's leg) for *Centella Asiatica*, the botanical name doesn't show any similarities to that term.
3. Having different botanical names and different families.
Below are Examples of the references.

If we put one name to one herb, the controversy shouldn't be occurred.

For example, "पुत्रंजीव" is an herb According to Vachaspatyam "पुत्रं जीवयति" is the etymology, it means the herb has Inherent energy(वीर्य) to cause to produce male progeny. Here it doesn't any problem with the botanical name, because it has a single botanical name "*Prutanjiva roburghi wall*", which directly Indicates the herb. The etymology elaborates on Inherent meaning. So, each term should be analysed by etymology. Some botanical names were directly adopted from Sanskrit, Malayalam, etc.,

Etymology of Ayurvedic terminology

I have taken below Ayurvedic terms from Ananda Kanda, a great text on Indian alchemy to demonstrate the need.

Ayurvedic terms	Botanical names	Family
1. Pashanabheda	i <i>Saxifraga ligulata</i> ii <i>Aerva lanata</i> iii <i>Kalanchoe pinnata</i> iv <i>Coleus aromaticus</i> v <i>Homonoia riparia</i> vi <i>Rotula aquatica</i> vii <i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	Saxifragaceae Amaranthaceae Crassulaceae Lamiaceae Euphorbiaceae Boraginaceae Lamiaceae

Etymological Analysis

Here the herb pashanabheda has seven different botanical names as well as families. The etymology of the herb is "पाषाणम् अश्मरीं भिनत्तीति" It means 'growing intruding the stones or rocks'. The etymological meaning is considering the herb has potential action on renal calculi, referred to as kidney stones. Without depending on the description from modern science, now it becomes easier to identify the herb's action quality, etc.

2. Kakanasa	i <i>Asclepias curassavica</i> ii <i>Martynia diandra</i> iii <i>Thunbergia alata</i>	Asclepiadaceae Pedaliaceae Acanthaceae
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Etymological Analysis

The herb has more than one different botanical names and families. Due to this, it is a bit difficult to recognize the actual herb. According to *shabdakalpadrumam*, the etymology of the herb is "काकस्य नासा इव फलमस्याः" it means "The fruit of the tree looks like crow's nose" through this knowledge directly can get the herb, no need to refer the botanical names. But of course, it needs expertise equipped with local traditions.

3. Elwalukam	i <i>Prunus cerasus</i> ii <i>Gisekia pharnaceoides</i>	Rosaceae Ficoidaceae.
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Etymological Analysis

The herb is described with more than one botanical name and families. According to *vachaspatyam*, the etymology of the herb is "एलतीति" Here the root verb इल (प्रेरणे), means "the smell of the tree provokes towards itself". In this regard one has to consider the देश्य category since this herb acquires several regional names, for example In Andhra Pradesh, it is called "Noogu dosa" in one region and "Kooturu budama" in some other regions, being one of the controversial herbs.

4. Sarpakshi	i <i>Ophiorrhiza mungos</i> ii <i>Polygonum plebejum</i>	Rubiaceae Polygonaceae
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Etymological Analysis

Sarpakshi has more than one different botanical name and families. According to *shabdakalpadrumam*, the etymology of the herb is "सर्पस्य अक्षीव पुष्पं यस्याः" it means "The flower of the tree looks like snake's eye" again knowledge from local traditions is desired here.

5. Gaujivha	i <i>Elephantopus scaber</i> ii <i>Onosma bracteatum</i>	Asteraceae Boraginaceae
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Etymological Analysis

The herb has more than one different botanical name and family. Here we have a little bit of difficult in recognising the actual herb. According to shabdakalpadrumam, the etymology of the herb is "गोजिह्वैव पत्रं यस्याः सा" it means

"The leaves of the tree look like cow's tongue" Through this knowledge directly can get the herb, no need to refer to the botanical names.

Conclusion

This etymology or description felicitates the researcher to identify correct herb for medicinal preparations learning aside the confusions created by Latin names. If we take Ayurvedic terms instead of botanical names the controversy shouldn't be happened. As per as etymology can be applied up to that we can analyze the terms. In some places the etymology doesn't apply, in such cases, we can give compound meaning. If we give such etymological analysis for each term it helps to recognize the actual herb. Based on plant morphology, qualities, and action taking the etymological help given in *Nighantus*. Certainly, one can procure quality herbs for R&D in Ayurveda. Since Ayurveda was prevalent in oral tradition, one should also consider the insights from local health traditions. Such efforts can bring back the glory of Ayurveda to make it a mainstream medicine.

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