

ATHARVAVEDA AND ITS MATERIA MEDICA

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ABSTRACT

Atharvaveda is the fourth and last Veda of Hindu literature. Its oldest name was 'ATHARVANGIRASAH', because it was contributed by two sages, ATHARVAN and ANGIRA. It is also known as 'Bhaishajyaveda'. Atharvaveda gives information regarding plants, minerals and animal products with their usage for medical purposes. For example, 'Apamarga', a plant is useful for cough, piles, itching and abdominal pain, whereas 'Lavana' is useful for pimples; 'Shankha' useful to protect from diseases and 'Mriga Shringa' is useful for pulmonary consumption and other chronic diseases etc.

ATHARVAVEDA is the fourth and last Veda of Hindu literature. Its oldest name was 'Atharvangirasah' because it was contributed by two sages 'Atharvan' and 'Angira'. The word Atharvan' denotes "Holy magic bringing happiness" which contains formula for the healing of diseases. Angiras denotes "Hostile or black magic" which includes, cures against enemies, rivals, malicious, magicians etc. The Atharvaveda is also called the 'Bhaishajyaveda' because its hymns represent Ayurveda of the vedic period and the name Atharvan is almost synonymous with bhesaja i.e. medicine. Atharvaveda gives detailed classification of the plant drugs based on their color, growth, properties, origin and form (VIII. 7/ 1,4,6,7,9,10,12,13,16,17, and 27). It is mentioned that water must be given the first place (II.3; VI. 100), next come plants (VIII.7.2). Atharvaveda has mentioned a

large number of plants for alleviating the diseases.

The Ayurveda is said that, it is a Upaveda of Atharvaveda, whereas according to some scholars, Ayurveda is considered as the fifth Veda. In the beginning diseases were cured by Charms and incantations. Later on in addition to the Charms the drug was also introduced. The Charms system was the religious of the two. There are references about fifty or more diseases (both major and minor) available in Atharvaveda. There are special hymns dedicated to praise the herbs like Jangida, Kushtha, Rohini, Apamarga etc.

Materia medica of Atharvaveda includes material from the vegetable kingdom, animal products, minerals etc. In this way there are more than one hundred plants, around ten minerals and animal products mentioned in 'Atharvaveda'.

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PLANTS AND THEIR PRODUCTS MENTIONED IN ATHARVAVEDA

S.No.	Name	Uses/Remarks	Reference (s)
1.	Ajasringi (Vishani) (<i>Gymnema sylvestra</i> R.Br.)	Useful in cough, thirst, dysentery, consumption and vomiting.	IV.37.2
2.	Ala	Useful for eye diseases	VI. 16.
3.	Apamarga (<i>Achyranthes aspera</i> Linn.)	Useful in cough, piles, itching and abdominal pain.	IV. 17.6,7, 8; IV.18. 7,8
4.	Aghata,	Useful to uproot the diseases.	IV. 37.5
5.	Amoola	Mentioned as a medicinal plant.	V. 31.4
6.	Abhrikhata.	Useful for eye diseases.	IV. 7.5, 6
7.	Arka (<i>Calotropis gigantea/procera</i> R.Br. ex Ait.B.Br.)		VI. 72.1
8.	Arjuna (<i>Terminalia arjuna</i> W. & A.)	Useful in consumption (Kshaya).	II. 8.3
9.	Arani (? <i>Premna integrefolia</i> Roxb.)	--	X. 8.20.
10.	Arundhati.	Useful in all types of diseases.	IV. 12.1 & V.5.5.VI.59.1,3
11.	Avayu	It is edible	IV.35. 5; VI.16 1,2 :
12.	Ashwatha (<i>Ficus religiosa</i> Linn.)	Useful in all types of diseases.	III.6.1.8; IV.32.4, IV.37.4. V.4.3,5 IV.37.10:VIII.7.9
13.	Avakolva.	It is a water plant.	X.4.2
14.	Ashwara	Useful as antidote to snake poison.	I.23. 1 & 3
15.	Asikin	Useful for Kilasa (leprosy) and Palita (baldness)	IV.37.3
16.	Aukshagandhi,	Kills germs.	I.24. 1 & 2
17.	Asuri (? <i>Brassica juncea</i> (Linn.) Ezern coss)	Kills germs and useful for healing the wounds.	XIX.44.1, 7; VI.102.3
18.	Anjana.	Kills germs, removes diseases, ends the feeling of depression in a patient.	IV.37.6
19.	Arataki.	--	VIII.10 (Paryaya 6.1)
20.	Alabu (<i>Lagenaria Siceraria</i> (mol) Standl.)	--	

21. Apaskambha.	Its leaves are useful as antidote to Poison	IV. 6.4
22. Audumbara (<i>Ficus glomerata</i> Roxb.)	--	XIX. 31.1
23. Aparajita (<i>Clitoria ternatea</i> Linn.)	Useful as an amulet for long life.	II. 27.3
24. Aralu (<i>Ailanthus excelsa</i> Roxb.)	Its leaves are free from any attachment like a God.	XX.131.18
25. Baja.	Useful for leprosy.	VIII.6.3,6,7,20,24
26. Bilva (<i>Aegle marmelos</i> Corr.)	It is compared with Mighty. It is strong, thorny.	XX. 136.13
27. Bisa	It is a lily plant.	IV. 34.5; V.17.16
28. Bhangra (<i>Cannabis sativa</i> , Linn.)	It is ruled by 'Soma' the king of plants.	XI. 6.15
29. Badhaka	It is compared as soldier.	VIII. 8.3
30. Balvaja (? <i>Imperata arundinacea</i> Cyrill.)	To make the seat out of this grass and perform havan and pray to God.	XIV.2.23
31. Chipudru	It cures Balasa, bleeding, neuralgia and pain in heart	VI. 127.2
32. Darbha (<i>Desmostachys bipinnata</i> Stapf.)	Useful as an antidote for snake poison and also as an amulet for sacrificial purpose.	XIX. 28.30,32, 33, VI. 43.2
33. Dasha Vriksha.	Useful in eliminating Pishacha and Grahas.	II.9.1
34. Dhana (? <i>Coriandrum sativum</i> Linn.)	--	XVIII. 3.69
35. Dhanya (<i>Oryza sativa</i> Linn.)	For Nourishment, and as healing balm	II.24.2,4, VI.140 2, VIII. 7.20, IX. 1.22
36. Dhava (<i>Anogeissus latifolia</i> Wall.)	Useful in healing the wounds.	VI. 5.5
37. Durva (<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> (Linn. Pers.)	--	XVIII.3.6
38. Guggulu (<i>Commiphora mukul</i>) (Hook ex-Stocks)	Kills germs, cures diseases, injuries and also curse.	XIX.38.1 & 2; IV.37.3
39. Ita.	It is a type of grass	VI. 14.3
40. Ishika (<i>Saccharum munja</i> (Roxb.)	--	XII. 2.54
41. Jeevanthi (<i>Leptadenia reticulata</i> W. & A.)	It can protect the man from dangerous illness and infuses life.	VIII. 2.6

42. Jangida	Kills the germs and protects men and cattle Useful in Takman (fever).	II.4.1.6.;XIX34.1, 10; XIX.25. 1-5
43. Kanakanaka	--	X. 4.22
44. Kushtha (<i>Saussurea lappa</i> (C.B. Clarke)	Useful for fever, consumption, wounds, cough, leprosy, and it is visva bhashaja. It is next to Soma plant in efficacy.	V.4;VI. 102.3; XIX. 39. 1,2
45. Krityadushani	Useful as antidote for poison, in dropsy cases and for pneumonia.	VIII. 7,10
46. Karkari	To throw away diseases spread among people	IV.37.5
47. Kyambu	--	XVIII.3.6
48. Kumuda (<i>Nymphaea alba</i> Linn.)	--	IV. 34.5
49. Krishna (<i>Piper nigrum</i> Linn.)?	Useful in leprosy and Palitya (baldness)	I.23. 1;VI. 83.2; VIII.7.1;
50. Kesabrimhani	--	XVIII.4.34;VI.21.3
51. Khadira (<i>Acacia catechu</i> Willd.)	Useful in wound healing.	III.6.1; V.5.5; VIII. 8.3
52. Kudhya	--	V.19.12
53. Kairatika (Kumarika)	Grows on the high ridges of the hills with lustrous shovels	X.4.14
54. Madhavathi	Intoxicating plant.	IV.7.4. & VI.16.2
55. Madhuga	--	VI. 102.3
56. Masha (<i>Phaseolus mungo</i> Linn.)	Mentioned as a part of food i.e. along with rice, barley and sesamum.	VI.140.2; XII.2.4,53
57. Madhula	Useful against insect for preventing stings	VII. 56.2
58. Munja (<i>Saccharum munja</i> Roxb.)	Useful for leprosy, fever, dysentery, thirst, urine retention and also for Dagdha Vrana (burns).	I.2.4 ; VI. 133
59. Mulali	--	IV. 34.5
60. Naladi (Jatamansi) (<i>Nardostachys jatamansi</i> ,DC.)	Useful for fever, poison and kills germs which contaminate water.	VI. 102.3.; IV.37.3

61. Narachi (<i>Ipomoea turpethum</i> Wat.)?	It is mentioned that God Protects the efficacy of this plant and of Amoola	V.31.4
62. Nitatni	Good for hair.	VI. 136.1, 2
63. Nyagrotha (<i>Ficus bengalensis</i> Linn.)	Prevents from diseases and their spreading	IV.37.4; V.5.5
64. Nyashtika	--	VI.139.1
65. Nada	It grows in the rains.	IV. 19.1
66. Oksha	--	II. 36.7
67. Oukshagandhi	Useful in killing the germs.	IV.37.3
68. Pippali (<i>Piper longum</i> Linn.)	Useful for leprosy, diabetes, boils and wounds	VI. 109. 1-3
69. Parushavarah	It acts like antidote for snake poison	X.4.2
70. Parna (Palasha) (<i>Butea monosperma</i> (Lam.) Kurtz.)	It helps in wound healing	III.5. 1.8; V.5.5
71. Patha (<i>Cissampelos pariera</i> Linn.)	Useful to cure fever.	II.27.1.7
72. Peela	Kills germs	IV.37.3
73. Peelu (<i>Salvadora persica</i> Linn.)	Fruits are edible	XX 135.12
74. Pundareeka (<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i> Geartn.)	It is mentioned that lotuses should be grown around the houses.	VI. 106.1
75. Putudru (Putidaru)	Healing balm for spiritual ailments.	VIII.2.28
76. Pushkara (<i>Inula racemosa</i> Hook.)	Useful as scent	III.22.4; IV.34.5; V.16.17; XI.3.8.; XII 1.24
77. Prisnaparni (<i>Uraria picta</i> Desv.)	Useful for visuchi, prevents abortion, promotes growth. It is referred as Lakshmana by some authors.	II. 25. 1-4
78. Pauda	Useful in snake bites.	X.4.5.7, 10 & 11
79. Pramandani	Useful in leprosy, tumour, itching, burns and poison. It can also kill germs.	IV. 37.3
80. Plaksha (<i>Ficus lacor</i> Buch-Ham.)	Useful for wound healing.	V.5.5
81. Rajani (<i>Curcuma longa</i> Linn.)	Useful for Kilasa, (leprosy) and Palita (baldness)	I.23.1
82. Rohini (<i>Picrorhiza kurroa</i> Royle ex Benth.)	Useful to heal bone fractures and wounds.	IV. 12. 1-7
83. Rama (Rabha)	Useful for Kilasa (leprosy) and Palita (baldness).	I.23.1
84. Shatavara (<i>Asparagus racemosus</i> Wild.)	Kills germs, Useful in malignant diseases of the skin (ulcer/eczema).	XIX. 36.1 & 3.5
85. Shyamaka (<i>Echinochloa frumentacea</i> Linn.)	It is mentioned as a tiny millet.	XIX.50.4

86. Shyama. (<i>Ipomoea petaloides</i> -Chois.)	Useful for leprosy.	I.24.4
87. Shilanjala	--	VI. 16.4
88. Shilachi (Laksha) (<i>Cocos lacca</i>)	It is wax.	V. 5.1. & 8
89. Shimshapa (<i>Dalbergia sissoo</i> Roxb.)	--	VI. 129.1; XX.129.7
90. Sahasrakanda	--	II.7.3
91. Sraktya	--	II. 11.2; VIII.5.4
92. Suparnasuri	Useful as deworming agent, cures Kushta (leprosy)	I.24.1
93. Shankha Pushpika (<i>Convolvulus pluricalis</i> Chois.)	--	VII.38.5
94. Shana (<i>Crotalaria verrucosa</i> Linn.)	--	II.4.5
95. Shami (<i>Prosopis spicigera</i> Linn.)	--	VI. 11.1
96. Shanda Durva (<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> Linn. Pers.)	--	XVIII. 3.6
97. Sheetika	--	XVIII. 3.60
98. Shara (<i>Saccharum munja</i> Roxb.)	--	IV. 7.4
99. Sheepala	It brings peace to heart and mouth when rubbed on the body.	VI. 12.3
100. Shepa Harshani	It improves the power.	IV.4.1
101. Sochi	Useful as antidote to snake poison	X.4.2
102. Syeni	It has the quality of sustaining this world	XVIII. 4.34
103. Saha	One of the plants which are ruled by Soma.	XI.6.15
104. Soma (<i>Amanita muscaria</i> Linn.)	It is the chief of the medicinal herbs	I.20.1; V.3.7.; VIII.7.20
105. Swetha	Useful as antidote for snake poison.	X.4.3
106. Shuka	Useful for Harima (Jaundice/Anemia)	I.22.4
107. Tarunaka	Useful as antidote for snake poison.	X.4.2
108. Truna	It is a grass	VI.54.1; VI.102.2,
109. Tila (<i>Sesamum indicum</i> Linn.)	Mentioned as a part of food alongwith rice, barley and beans	XVIII 3.69;VI.140.2
110. Talasha (Talisha) (<i>Abies webbiana</i> Linn.)	It is mentioned as one of the medicinal plants among which soma is best.	VI. 15.3
111. Tastuva	Useful as antidote for snake Poison.	V.13.11; V.10.11
112. Tabuva	Useful as antidote for snake Poison.	V.13-10
113. Taudi	Useful for antidote for snake Poison.	X.4.24
114. Taubilika	--	VI. 16.3
115. Tajad bhanga	--	VIII. 8.3

116. Traymana (<i>Gentiana kurroa</i> Royle.)	Useful for fever and all pain giving diseases	VIII. 2.6.; XIX 39.1
117. Ucchusma (Kapikacchu) (<i>Mucuna prurita</i> Hook.)	Useful to enhance virility and as rejuvenating agent.	IV. 4.3
118. Uttanaparni	It is a medicinal plant with expanded leaves.	III. 18.2
119. Upajika (<i>Aconitum heterophyllum</i> Wall.)?	Useful as antidote	II.3.4. : VI. 100.2
120. Urvaru	It cuts the bond of disease from body	VI. 14.2.
121. Varana (<i>Crataeva nurvula</i> Buch-Ham.)	--	X. 3.1-25
122. Varanavathi	Useful as antidote	IV.7.1.
123. Vishanaka	Useful in genetic disorders	VI. 109.3; IX. 8.20
124. Vacha (<i>Acorus calamus</i> Linn.)	Useful as antidote.	II.31.2, 34; IV.7.4 & 5
125. Yava (<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> Linn.)	It is a food material (barley)	VI.30. 1; VI. 50.1

MINERALS AND METALS WHICH ARE USED FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES

1.	Anjana (Antimony / Collyrium)	Cures the diseases like, jaundice, eczema, consumption etc	IV. 9. 2-10; XIX 44. 1-10; XIX 45. 1-5
2.	Ayasa (Iron)	--	V.28.1. 5 & 8
3.	Mrittika (Soil)	Lends its power to eradicate poison when besmeared on the Jody.	VI. 100.1
4.	Hiranyam (Gold) (Haritam)	God has golden colour (i.e. gold is created by him.)	I.35.1, 2 & XI 3.8.
5.	Lavana (Salt)	Useful to cure pimples by suppurating when sprinkled on them.	VII. 76.1.
6.	Rajata (Silver)	Mouth, tongue and hands are silvery possionate.	V.28.1.
7.	Seesam (Lead)	It is used for preparing the bullets for protection (not for medicinal use.)	I.16.2 & 3.
8.	Trapu (Tin)	Described as God's ashes, (i.e. created by him.)	XI. 3.8.

ANIMAL PRODUCTS MENTIONED FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES

1.	Ajinam (Skin)	Skin of animals like, tiger, elephant, lion etc.	IV. 7.6
2.	Ajyam / Ghrita (Clarified butter)	In improves the agni (fire) eg. Jatharagni (Digestive fire)	III.10.6,111; II.75.2
3.	Dadhi (Curd)	In a good house curd should also be stored alongwith milk, ghee, and honey.	III.12.7
4.	Ksheera (Milk)	To enhance strength and beauty.	II.26.4 & 5
5.	Madhu (Honey)	Honey is more effective in spring season.	IX. 1. 1-24
6.	Mriga Sringa (Animal horn)	Useful for curing pulmonary consumption, chronic disease deeply involved in the heart of the patient	III.7.1,2; VI.44.1-3
7.	Palal (Flesh)	Meat for consumption	VIII. 6.2.
8.	Sarpavisha (Snake Poison)	To kill the spirit	V.13.4.
9.	Shankha (Shell)	To protect organs from diseases.	IV. 10. 1-7

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सारांश

अथर्ववेद में द्रव्यगुण

- पी.वी.वी. प्रसाद

अथर्ववेद हिंदु वाङ्मय का चतुर्थ एवं अंतिम वेद है। इसका दूसरा नाम अथर्वांगीरसः है। क्योंकि इसमें अथर्वण एवं अंगीरस नामक दो महर्षियों का योगदान है। यह भैषज्यवेद भी कहलाता है। अथर्ववेद में पेड़ पौधों और जानवरों से प्राप्त एवं खनिज औषधद्रव्यों तथा उनके गुणधर्मों के विषय में सूचना उपलब्ध है। उदाहरण के लिए अपामार्ग को कास, अर्श, कण्डू तथा उदरशूल आदी रोगों में उपयोगी बताया गया है। लवण को युवानपिडिका रोग में, शंख को रोगों से बचाव के लिए और मृगशृंग को क्षय एवं जीर्ण व्याधियों में उपयोगी कहा गया है।