ATHARVAVEDA AND ITS MATERIA MEDICA

P.V.V. PRASAD

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 bheshaja 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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<th>Name</th>
<th>Uses/Remarks</th>
<th>Reference(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ajasringi (Vishani) (<em>Gymnema sylvestra</em> R.Br.)</td>
<td>Useful in cough, thirst, dysentery, consumption and vomiting.</td>
<td>IV. 37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ala</td>
<td>Useful for eye diseases</td>
<td>VI. 16.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Apamarga (<em>Achyranthes aspera</em> Linn.)</td>
<td>Useful in cough, piles, itching and abdominal pain.</td>
<td>IV. 17.6, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Aghata,</td>
<td>Useful to uproot the diseases.</td>
<td>IV. 37.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Amoola</td>
<td>Mentioned as a medicinal plant.</td>
<td>V. 31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Abhrikhata.</td>
<td>Useful for eye diseases.</td>
<td>IV. 7.5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Arka (<em>Calotropis gigantea/procera</em> R.Br. ex Ait.B.Br.)</td>
<td>Useful in consumption (Kshaya).</td>
<td>VI. 72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Arjuna (<em>Terminalia arjuna</em> W. &amp; A.)</td>
<td>Useful in consumption (Kshaya).</td>
<td>II. 8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Arani (? <em>Premna integrefolia</em> Roxb.)</td>
<td>Useful in all types of diseases.</td>
<td>IV. 12.1 &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Arundhati.</td>
<td>It is edible</td>
<td>V. 5.5, VI. 59.1, 1, 2 :</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Avayu</td>
<td>It is edible</td>
<td>IV. 35. 5; VI.16 1, 2 :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Ashwatha (<em>Ficus religiosa</em> Linn.)</td>
<td>Useful in all types of diseases.</td>
<td>III. 6.1.8; IV.32.4, IV.37.4, V.4.3, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Avakolva.</td>
<td>It is a water plant.</td>
<td>IV. 37.10; VIII.7.9</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Ashwara</td>
<td>Useful as antidote to snake poison.</td>
<td>X. 4.2</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Asikin</td>
<td>Useful for Kilasa (leprosy) and Palita (baldness)</td>
<td>I.23. 1 &amp; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Aukshagandhi,</td>
<td>Kills germs.</td>
<td>IV. 37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Asuri (? <em>Brassica juncea</em> (Linn.) Ezern coss)</td>
<td>Kills germs and useful for healing the wounds.</td>
<td>I.24. 1 &amp; 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Anjana</td>
<td>Kills germs, removes diseases, ends the feeling of depression in a patient.</td>
<td>XIX. 44.1, 7; VI.102.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Arataki.</td>
<td></td>
<td>IV. 37.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Alabu (<em>Lagenaria Siceraria</em> (mol) Standl.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>VIII.10 (Paryaya 6.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21. Apaskambha. Its leaves are useful as antidote to Poison IV. 6.4
22. Audumbara (Ficus glomerata Roxb.) Useful as an amulet for long life. XIX. 31.1
23. Aparajita (Clitoria ternatea Linn.) Its leaves are free from any attachment like a God. II. 27.3
24. Aralu (Ailanthus excelsa Roxb.) Useful for leprosy. XX.131.18
25. Baja. It is compared with Mighty. It is strong, thorny. VIII.6.3,6,7,20,24
26. Bilva (Aegle marmelos Corr.) It is a lily plant. XX. 136.13
27. Bisa It is compared as soldier. IV. 34.5; V.17.16
28. Bhanga (Cannabis sativa, Linn.) It is ruled by ‘Soma’ the king of plants. XI. 6.15
29. Badhaka To make the seat out of this grass and perform havan and pray to God. 
30. Balvaja (? Imperata arundinacea Cyrill.) It cures Balasa, bleeding, neuralgia and pain in heart 

31. Chipudru It is compared as soldier. XIV.2.23
32. Darbha (Desmostachys bipinnata Stapf.) Useful as an antidote for snake poison and also as an amulet for sacrificial purpose. VI. 127.2
33. Dasha Vriksha. Useful in eliminating Pishacha and Grahas. XIX. 28.30,32, 33, 34
34. Dhana (? Coriandrum sativum Linn.) For Nourishment, and as healing balm 
35. Dhanya (Oryza sativa Linn.) Useful in healing the wounds. XVIII. 3.69
36. Dhava (Anogeissus latifolia Wall.) Kills germs, cures diseases, injuries and also curse. II.9.1
37. Durva (Cynodon dactylon (Linn. Pers.) Useful as an antidote for snake poison and also as an amulet for sacrificial purpose. XIX. 28.30,32, 33, 34
38. Guggulu (Commiphora mukul) Useful in eliminating Pishacha and Grahas. VI. 43.2
(Hook ex-Stocks) --
39. Ita. It is a type of grass XIX.38.1 & 2; IV.37.3
40. Ishika (Saccharum munja (Roxb.) It is a type of grass XI. 2.54
41. Jeevanthi (Leptadenia reticulata W. & A.) It can protect the man from dangerous illness and infuses life. VIII. 2.6
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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Jangida</td>
<td>Kills the germs and protects men and cattle</td>
<td>II.4.1.6.; XIX.34.1, 10; XIX.25.1-5</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use in Takman (fever).</td>
<td>X. 4.22</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>Kanakanaka</td>
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<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Kushtha (<em>Saussurea lappa</em> (C.B. Clarke))</td>
<td>Useful for fever, consumption, wounds, cough, leprosy, and it is visva bhashaja. It is next to Soma plant in efficacy.</td>
<td>V.4; VI. 102.3; XIX. 39.1, 2</td>
</tr>
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<td>45</td>
<td>Krityadushani</td>
<td>Useful as antidote for poison, in dropsy cases and for pneumonia.</td>
<td>VIII. 7, 10</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>Karkari</td>
<td>To throw away diseases spread among people</td>
<td>IV.37.5</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>Kyambu</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>XVIII.3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Kumuda (<em>Nymphaea alba</em> Linn.)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>IV. 34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Krishna (<em>Piper nigrum</em> Linn.)</td>
<td>Useful in leprosy and Palitya (baldness)</td>
<td>I.23.1; VI. 83.2; VIII. 7.1; XVIII.4.34; VI. 21.3</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>Kesabrimhani</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>Khadira (<em>Acacia catechu</em> Willd.)</td>
<td>Useful in wound healing.</td>
<td>III.6.1; V. 5.5; VIII. 8.3; V. 19.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Kudhya</td>
<td>Grows on the high ridges of the hills with lustrous shovels</td>
<td>X.4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Kairatika (Kumarika)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>IV. 7.4. &amp; VI. 16.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Madhavathi</td>
<td>Intoxicating plant.</td>
<td>VI. 102.3</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>Madhuga</td>
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<td>VI.140.2; XII.2.4.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Masha (<em>Phaseolus mungo</em> Linn.)</td>
<td>Mentioned as a part of food i.e. along with rice, barley and sesamum.</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>Madhula</td>
<td>Useful against insect for preventing stings</td>
<td>VII. 56.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Munja (<em>Saccharum munja</em> Roxb.)</td>
<td>Useful for leprosy, fever, dysentery, thirst, urine retention and also for Dagdha Vrana (burns).</td>
<td>I.2.4; VI. 133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Mulali</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>IV. 34.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Naladi (Jatamansi) (<em>Nardostachys jatamansi</em>, DC.)</td>
<td>Useful for fever, poison and kills germs which contaminate water.</td>
<td>VI. 102.3.; IV.37.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
61. Narachi (Ipomoea turpethum Wat.)?
   It is mentioned that God Protects the efficacy of this plant and of Amoola
   Good for hair.
62. Nitatni
63. Nyagrotha (Ficus bengalensis Linn.)
   Prevents from diseases and their spreading
64. Nyashtika
65. Nada
66. Oksha
67. Oukshagandhi
68. Pippali (Piper longum Linn.)
69. Parushavarah
   It acts like antidote for snake poison
70. Parna (Palasha) (Butea monosperma (Lam.) Kurtz.)
   It helps in wound healing
71. Patha (Cissampelos pariera Linn.)
72. Peela
   Useful to cure fever.
73. Peelu (Salvadora persica Linn.)
   Fruits are edible
74. Pandareeka (Nelumbo nucifera Geartn.)
   It is mentioned that lotuses should be grown around the houses.
   Healing balm for spiritual ailments.
75. Putudru (Putidaru)
76. Pushkara (Inula racemosa Hook.)
77. Prisnaparni (Uraria picta Desv.)
   Useful for visuchi, prevents abortion, promotes growth.
   It is referred as Lakshmana by some authors.
78. Pauda
79. Pramandani
80. Plaksha (Ficus lacor Buch-Ham.)
81. Rajani (Curcuma longa Linn.)
82. Rohini (Picrorhiza kurroa Royle ex Benth.)
83. Rama (Rabha)
84. Shatavara (Asparagus racemosus Wild.)
   Kills germs, Useful in malignant diseases of the skin (ulcer/eczema).
85. Shyamaka (Echinochloa frumentacea Linn.)
   It is mentioned as a tiny millet.
86. Shyama. (*Ipomoea petaloides*-Chois.) Useful for leprosy.

87. Shilanjala

88. Shilachi (Laksha) (*Coccus lacca*) It is wax.

89. Shimshapa (*Dalbergia sissoo* Roxb.)

90. Sahasrakanda

91. Sraktya

92. Suparnasuri Useful as deworming agent, cures Kushta (leprosy)

93. Shankha Pushpika (*Convulvulus pluricalis* Chois.)

94. Shana (*Crotalaria verrucosa* Linn.)

95. Shami (*Prosopis spicigera* Linn.)

96. Shanda Durva (*Cynodon dactylon* Linn. Pers.)

97. Sheetika

98. Shara (*Saccharum munja* Roxb.)

99. Sheepala It brings peace to heart and mouth when rubbed on the body.

100. Shepa Harshani It improves the power.

101. Sochi Useful as antidote to snake poison

102. Syeni It has the quality of sustaining this world

103. Saha One of the plants which are ruled by Soma.

104. Soma (*Amanita muscaria* Linn.) It is the chief of the medicinal herbs

105. Swetha Useful as antidote for snake poison.

106. Shuka Useful for Harima (Jaundice/Anemia)

107. Tarunaka Useful as antidote for snake poison.

108. Truna It is a grass

109. Tila (*Sesamum indicum* Linn.) Mentioned as a part of food alongwith rice, barley and beans

110. Talasha (Talisha) (*Abies webbiana* Linn.) It is mentioned as one of the medicinal plants among which soma is best.

111. Tastuva Useful as antidote for snake Poison.

112. Tabuva Useful as antidote for snake Poison.

113. Taudi Useful for antidote for snake Poison.

114. Taubilika

115. Tajad bhanga
116. Traymana (Gentiana kurroa Royle.)
Useful for fever and all pain giving diseases

117. Ucchusma (Kapikacchu) (Mucuna prurita Hook.)
Useful to enhance virility and as rejuvenating agent.

118. Uttanaparni
It is a medicinal plant with expanded leaves.

119. Upajika (Aconitum heterophyllum Wall.)?
Useful as antidote

120. Urvaru
It cuts the bond of disease from body

121. Varana (Crataeva nurvula Buch-Ham.)
Useful as antidote

122. Varanavathi
Useful in genetic disorders

123. Vishanaka
Useful as antidote.

124. Vacha (Acorus calamus Linn.)

125. Yava (Hordeum vulgare Linn.)
It is a food material (barley)

VIII. 2.6.; XIX 39.1

IV. 4.3

III. 18.2

II.3.4. : VI. 100.2

VI. 14.2.

X. 3.1-25

IV.7.1.

VI. 109.3; IX. 8.20

II.31.2, 34; IV.7.4

& 5

VI.30. 1; VI. 50.1
### MINERALS AND METALS WHICH ARE USED FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Anjana (Antimony / Collyrium)</td>
<td>Cures the diseases like, jaundice, eczema, consumption etc</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Ayasa (Iron)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mrittika (Soil)</td>
<td>Lends its power to eradicate poison when besmeared on the body.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hiranyam (Gold) (Haritam)</td>
<td>God has golden colour (i.e. gold is created by him.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lavana (Salt)</td>
<td>Useful to cure pimples by suppurring when sprinkled on them.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Rajata (Silver)</td>
<td>Mouth, tongue and hands are silvery passionate.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Seesam (Lead)</td>
<td>It is used for preparing the bullets for protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Trapu (Tin)</td>
<td>Described as God's ashes, (i.e. created by him.)</td>
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### ANIMAL PRODUCTS MENTIONED FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ajinam (Skin)</td>
<td>Skin of animals like, tiger, elephant, lion etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ajyam / Ghrita (Clarified butter)</td>
<td>In improves the agni (fire) eg. Jatharagni (Digestive fire)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dadhi (Curd)</td>
<td>In a good house curd should also be stored alongwith milk, ghee, and honey.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ksheera (Milk)</td>
<td>To enhance strength and beauty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Madhu (Honey)</td>
<td>Honey is more effective in spring season.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mriga Sringa (Animal horn)</td>
<td>Useful for curing pulmonary consumption, chronic disease deeply involved in the heart of the patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Palal (Flesh)</td>
<td>Meat for consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sarpavisha (Snake Poison)</td>
<td>To kill the spirit</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Shankha (Shell)</td>
<td>To protect organs from diseases.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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सारांश

अथवाचरण में द्रव्यगुण

- पी.वी.वी. प्रसाद

अथवाचरण हिंदु वायु का चतुर्थ एवं अंतिम वेद है। इसका दूसरा नाम अथवांगीरस: है। क्योंकि इसमें अथवाचरण एवं अंगीरस नामक दो महर्षियों का योगदान है। यह भ्रष्टज्ञाचरण भी कहलाता है। अथवाचरण में पेड़-पौधों और जानवरों से प्राप्त एवं खनिज औषधि द्रव्यों तथा उनके गुणधर्मों के विषय में सूचना उपलब्ध है। उदाहरण के लिए अपामार्ग को कास, अर्श, कण्ठू तथा उदरश्लूल आदि रोगों में उपयोगी बताया गया है। लतवन को युवानपिडिका रोग में, शंख को रोगों से बचाव के लिए और मृगश्लूष्ण को क्षय एवं जीर्ण व्याधियों में उपयोगी कहागया है।