



## Review Article

### VATA (*FICUS BENGHALENSIS*) A DETAILED REVIEW FROM CLASSICAL TEXTS

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#### ABSTRACT

Nature is enriched with a huge variety of plant life having distinctive properties. Human ardor for herbal medicine dates lower back to Vedic length. People have been making use of plant materials lengthy earlier than scientific explanations were advanced. One of the tremendous capabilities of the local health practice is they use domestically available and quite often readily available sources.

The "Birds eye view" of our great saints led to the invention of different medicinal plants one among them is drug *Vata*. *Vata* is considered as one among the *Pancha valkala* which constitute the famous *Ksheeri vrukshas*. Elaborate description of the plant *Vata* and its therapeutic action are explained by our *Acharyas* in *Vedas*, *Puranas*, and *Samhithas* and in the later *Nighantus*. *Vata (Ficus benghalensis)* is such a drug which is widely and cheaply available and is having many mentioning in the classics for its effectiveness in many diseases. *Vata* does not have any controversies in any of the literatures or classics regarding its identification or usage.

The current article is to highlight the importance of drug *Vata (Ficus benghalensis)* and references has been collected from *Vedas*, *Puranas*, *Samhita kala*, *Nighantu kala*. Synonyms, *Gana Varga*, Vernacular names etc has been collected and arranged systematically.

**KEYWORDS:** *Vata*, *Samhitas*, *Nighantus*, Synonyms, *Ganas*.

#### INTRODUCTION

*Vata* or Banyan tree is a large evergreen spreading tree distribute all over India in the temperate climate growing upto height of 15- 25m and wide in radius. A unique feature of this tree is its pillar-like aerial roots which forms new trunks and makes the tree grow laterally. The tree bar is thick, whitish coloured. The leaves are thick, oval 4-6 inches long. The fruits are red, round about 0.5-0.75 inches in diameter and spongy. The flowers are not visible in the tree. The male and female flowers are enclosed in an auxiliary, sessile, depressed red fruits. The new tender buds are seen in summer season along with fruits.

#### Vedic Period

*Nyagrodha* is mentioned in Vedic literature (Maitrayani 4.4.1; Atharva 4.37.4) Brahmanas (Satapata 5.3.5.13, Aitareya Brah.7.30) Upanishads [Chandovaya and Kalpasootras (Katyayana Sr.15.5.38; Gobhila Gr.2.6.6; Apastambha Dharma 1.1.2.38)]<sup>[1]</sup>.

In Atharva veda there is mentioning of drug *Vata* which is useful in *Yoni roga*, *Shukra shonita dosha*, *Madhumeha*, *Moorcha* etc<sup>[2]</sup>.

#### Puranas

It is also mentioned in Panini's *Astadhyayi*, *Vartika* and *Mahabhashya*. The plant is regarded as symbol of royal nature (*Kastra dharma*), due to its expansiveness and stability through a large number of properties. The minute fruits of the plant with hypnophodium (the apparent fruit) are called *Vatakanika*. In early literatures, the fruit of *Nyagrodha* have been described along with other *Ficus* fruits like *Ashwatha*, *Udumbara*, and *Plaksha* which are similar in properties.<sup>[3]</sup>

#### Brihat trayees

#### Caraka Samhita

The qualities of *Nyagrodha pallava*<sup>[4]</sup> is told as '*kashaaya stambhanaa Sheeta hitaa Pittaatisaarinaam.*'

*Vata* is a drug used to prepare *Kashaya* and is used for *Vasti* in *Kapha vikaras* along with *Madhu taila lavana* and in *Pitta vikara*, along with *Madhu* and *Ghrita*.<sup>[5]</sup>

It is mentioned that *Vata* is a tree found in *Jangala desha*<sup>[6]</sup>.

*Vata*, due to its *Purisha sangrahaniya* action, is said to be of good applicability in *Ativirechana*<sup>[7]</sup>. It is used for *Vasti* in elephant<sup>[8]</sup>.

In the context of *Chandhanadi taila*, *Nyagrodha* and *Vata* are mentioned together<sup>[9]</sup>. For that Cakrapani comments that '*Vataha nishpraroho vataha*' and '*nyagrodhasthu prarohavaan*', i.e., *Vata* is without prop roots while in *Nyagrodha* prop roots are present.

It is mentioned for curing *Grahani roga*<sup>[10]</sup>. It is mentioned in *Chikitsa* of *Kasa*<sup>[11]</sup>. It is said to be of used in cases of *Kshaya*, *Trushna*<sup>[12]</sup> and *Sarpavisha*<sup>[13]</sup>.

### Susruta Samhita

It is mentioned in *Bhagna chikitsa*<sup>[14]</sup>. It is said to be used in *Kusta*<sup>[15]</sup>. It is mentioned as *Nadi rogagna dravya*.<sup>[16]</sup> It is explained in *Mishraka chikitsa*<sup>[17]</sup> i.e. for *Mukhamardana*. It is used in case of *Virechana yoga*<sup>[18]</sup>.

It is explained in treatment of *Puyakya sukra dosh*<sup>[19]</sup>. It is mentioned to be used in case of women desiring of male child<sup>[20]</sup>. It is used as *Agada* in *Alarka visha*<sup>[21]</sup>.

It is mentioned that children should be given bath under *Vata vruksha*.<sup>[22]</sup> It is mentioned that *Vatadi praroha putapaka* is given to *Atisari*<sup>[23]</sup> and it is used in *Raktatisara chikitsa*<sup>[24]</sup>. It is mentioned in *Matsya ghrita tailadi prayoga*<sup>[25]</sup>. It is mentioned as *pathya* in *Rakta Pitta*<sup>[26]</sup>. There is reference of *Durva Vata pallavadi leha* for *Rakta Pitta*<sup>[27]</sup>.

### Astanga Hrudaya

It is mentioned for *Putapaka*<sup>[28]</sup>.

It is used as a relief for *Puyashukla*<sup>[29]</sup>. *Vata shrungashtaka* is used for *Garbha sthirata*<sup>[30]</sup>. In *Shareera* 1<sup>st</sup> chapter *Vatasruna* (vegetative bud) along with cow's milk is indicated specially in *Stree Vandhyatwa*<sup>[31]</sup>.

*Nyagrodhasya prathamodhbhinna praroho vatasungaha tasyaashtakamithi*

*Sungam- pradamodhbhinna patrankuam iteendu*

In *Ashtanga Hrudaya* in the context of *Garbha sthapana* says that

*payasaa.....peetam vatasrunaashtakam tathaa ||*

i.e., Eight *Vata Srunga* along with cow's milk is advised to take for the purpose of *Garbha sthapana* action.

It is used to cure *Rakta Pitta*<sup>[32]</sup>. It is used to cure *Kasa roga*<sup>[33]</sup>. It is mentioned that *Nyagrodhadi gana taila* is used in case of *Siro amsa parshva soola*<sup>[34]</sup>. It is mentioned to cure *Chardi*, *Jvara*, *Atisara*, *Murcha*, *Daha* etc<sup>[35]</sup>. It is used to cure *Pakvatisara*<sup>[36]</sup>, and is mentioned to cure *Raktatisara* with *Daha*, *Jvara* and *Gudapaka* due to excessive *Pittaja Aahara*

*vihara* in *Pittajatisara*<sup>[37]</sup>. It is used to cure *Pittaja Grahani*<sup>[38]</sup>.

It is used in case of *Talu kantaka*<sup>[39]</sup>. Its paste is applied in *Mukha dushika*.<sup>[40]</sup> Paste of *Vatadi dravyas* is used to cure *Vyanga* and to increase *Mukha kanti*<sup>[41]</sup>. It is used as medicine for *Nilika*, *Tilaka*, *Vyanga*, *Vali*, *Palitha* etc.<sup>[42]</sup> It is used as *Sarpa Visha Pratishodhana*<sup>[43]</sup>. It is used for *Rasayana vidhi*<sup>[44]</sup>.

### Ref in other Samhitas

#### Bhela Samhita

*Vata* along with other drugs are mentioned to give in *Pittatisara*<sup>[45]</sup>. It is mentioned to cure *Atisara*<sup>[46]</sup>.

#### Kashyapa Samhita

It is mentioned as a *Dravya* to generate intellect<sup>[47]</sup>. *Parthiva* is told to collect *Vata Sunga* to worship and to wear<sup>[48]</sup>. It is also used to cure burning sensation<sup>[49]</sup>. The *Vata* is used to treat *Charmadala* due to *Pitta*<sup>[50]</sup>.

#### Yoga Ratnakara

*Yoga Ratnakara* in the context of *Yoni roga chikitsa* has told that<sup>[51]</sup> *Vatasungam* along with other drugs when given to a *Vandhya Stree*, will definitely help in giving birth to a child. He has also commented that *Vatankura* along with other drugs is *Garbhaprada*.

#### Bhavamisra

In *Yoni Rogaadikaara* while explaining *Vandhya Chikitsa* he tells a woman who consumes *Vatasunga* will give birth to a healthy male child without doubt<sup>[52]</sup>.

### Reference in Medieval Period

#### 1) Danwantari Nighantu<sup>[53]</sup>

In this *Vata* is explained under *Amradi varga*. Various synonyms of *Vata* are mentioned in this *Nighantu*. It is explained as *Sita veerya*, *Kasaya* and acts as *Stambhana* and *Rukshana*. It is indicated in *Trusna*, *Vamana*, *Murcha* and *Rakta Pitta*.

#### 2) Kaiyadeva Nighantu<sup>[54]</sup>

*Paryaya* and *Guna karma* of *Vata* is explained. *Vata* is *Rooksha*, *Sita*, *Grahi*, *Kashaya rasa* and destroys *Yoni dosha*'s. It also acts as *Varnya*, *Vranaghna*, *Visarpaghna* and *Kapha Pitta shamaka*.

#### 3) Madanapala Nighantu<sup>[55]</sup>

*Vata Nama guna* is explained in this *Nighantu*. *Vata* is *Sita*, *Guru*, *Grahi* and *Kapha Pitta vranapaha*.

#### 4) Bhavaprakasha Nighantu<sup>[56]</sup>

Vernacular names and morphology is explained in this *Nighantu*. *Guna* and *Prayoga* are also mentioned. It is used in *Yoni dosha*, *Katipida Sandipida*, *Atisara*, *Pravahika* etc. usable part is *Panchanga*, chemical constituents is tannin.

**5) Raja Nighantu<sup>[57]</sup>**

Vata is explained under *Amradi varga*. Synonyms of Vata are mentioned. It is having *Kashaya* and *Madhura rasa*. *Sheeta veerya* and *Kapha Pitta shamaka* in nature and is indicated in *Jvara*, *Daha*, *Trushna*, *Moha*, *Vrana*, *Shopha*. *Twak*, *Jata*, *Kshira*, *Beeja* and *Phala* are the useful parts. *Matra* is also mentioned.

**6) Shaligrama Nighnatu<sup>[58]</sup>**

Synonyms and vernacular names are mentioned. Its properties are mentioned as *Rooksha*, *Sheeta*, *Guru*, *Mala shodaka*, *Kapha Pitta nashaka*. Structure of tree is also mentioned.

**7) Nighantu Adarsha<sup>[59]</sup>**

Structure of Vata, vernacular name and *Nirukti* is explained. Various *Upayoga* and *Amayika prayogas* are also mentioned.

**8) Priya Nighantu<sup>[60]</sup>**

Vata is mentioned under *Haritakyadi varga*. Structure of the tree is also explained. It is used in *Atisara*, *Raktasrava* and *Charma roga*.

**9) Hrudayadeepika Nighantu<sup>[61]</sup>**

It is explained in *Kapha Pittaghna varga*. Various synonyms are mentioned.

**Synonyms**

The roots of the origin of the words make the learning process more colorful exotic and interesting. Here all the synonyms of Vata are collected in the table and short etymological derivation with appropriate meaning is given below as opined by various *Koshas* and commentators.

**Synonyms according to different Acharyas**

Synonyms	D.N	K.D.N	M.P.N	B.P.N	S.N	R.N	S.G.N	N.A	P.N
Bahupada	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Bhandira							+		
Bhrungi							+		
Dhanta		+							
Dhruva	+			+					
Jatala						+	+		
Jati					+		+		
Karmaja							+		
Ksheeri	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		
Mahachaya						+	+		
Mandali						+	+		
Neela						+	+		
Nyagrodha	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Padarohi		+	+				+		
Raktaphala	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Rohini						+			
Shipharuha						+			
Shipharuha							+		
Shrungi	+	+		+		+			
Shrunga						+			
Skandha Janma	+	+					+	+	
Skandharooaha				+	+	+	+		
Vaishravanalaya	+			+	+			+	
Vaishravanodaya							+		
Vanaspati	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Vata	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Vitapi						+	+		
Vrukshanata							+		
Yakshataru		+	+			+	+		
Yakshavasaka		+	+			+	+		
Yakshavasa							+		
Yamapriya							+		

## Expositions of synonyms

1) *Vata - Vatati veshtati moolai iti |*

It spreads all over by its hanging/supporting roots.

2) *Nyagrodha-*

a. *Nyak runadhi iti rudhir aavarane |*

b. *Nyak tiryak runadhi margam moolai iti vaa |*

It spreads or covers a large area or it obstructs the pathway with supporting roots.

3) *Bahupaada-a) bahava paada asya iti*

## Classification of the drug Vata

The ancient authors classified the drug in different *Ganas, Vargas, Skandhas* etc. The drugs have been classified on the basis of their morphological characters, properties, pharmaco dynamics as well as therapeutic values. The classification of *Vata* is as follows.

Text	Gana/Varga
<i>Caraka Samhita</i>	<i>Kashaya skandha dravya, Mutra sangrahaneeya dravya, Saka varga, Garbha sthapana gana</i>
<i>Susruta Samhita</i>	<i>Nyagrodadi gana</i>
<i>Dhanwanthari nighantu</i>	<i>Amradi varga, Mishrakaadi varga</i>
<i>Kaiyyadeva nighantu</i>	<i>Oushadi varga</i>
<i>Madanapala nighantu</i>	<i>Vatadi varga, Abhayadi varga</i>
<i>Bhavaprakasha nighantu</i>	<i>Vatadi varga, Gudoochyaadi varga</i>
<i>Raja nighantu</i>	<i>Amradi, Dharanyadi, Oushadi and Mishrakaadi varga</i>
<i>Saligrama nighantu</i>	<i>Vatadi varga</i>
<i>Nighantu sesa</i>	<i>Vruksha skandha</i>
<i>Priya nighantu</i>	<i>Hareetakyaaadi varga</i>

## Types of Vata

Caraka samhita in *Chikitsa sthana* 3/258 in the context of *Chandhanadi taila, Nyagrodha* and *Vata* are mentioned together. For that *Cakrapaani* comments that *Vataha nishpraroho Vataha* and *Nyagrodhasthu prarohavaan*, ie *Vata* is without prop roots while in *Nyagrodha* prop roots are present.

There are several variants of this species differing in leaf shape, presence or absence of arial roots etc. One form, cultivated in gardens, with leaf bases doubled into cup or cone shaped structures has been considered by some as a distinct species [62].

## Vernacular Names

English- The Banyan tree.

Sanskrit- *Vata, Rakta phala, Shrunji, Nyagrodha, Skandhaja, Dhruva Ksheeri, Vaishravana vasa, Bahupada, Vanaspati.*

Latin- *Ficus bengalensis* Linn.

Hindi- Bada, Baragad

Bengali- Bata

Punjabi- Boda

Marathi- Vada

Gujarati- Bada

Tamil- Aala

b) *Bahava paada moolani asya iti vaa bahava paadaa avaroha asyeti |*

It has many legs i.e. it has many supporting roots which are compared to legs.

4) *Vaishravanaalaya-vaishnavasya yakshapate kuberasya aavasa iti |*

This tree is the residing place for lord *Kubera*.

Telugu- Veddamarri/Marichetta.

Malayalam- Aala/Peral

Kannada- Aala

## Taxonomical Classification

Kingdom Plantae – Plants

Plants Subkingdom Tracheobionta– Vascular plants

Super division Spermatophyta – Seed plants

Division Magnoliophyta – Flowering plants

Class Magnoliopsida – Dicotyledons

Subclass Hamamelididae

Order Urticales

Family Moraceae – Mulberry family

Genus *Ficus* L

Fig Species *Ficus benghalensis* L. – Indian banyan

## CONCLUSION

*Vata* (*Ficus benghalensis*) is a plant with a rich ethnobotanical history. The present review on *Vata* from different classical texts and *Nighantus* can be useful to know about the different useful parts, therapeutic uses, formulations, synonyms etc of the plant. By this way we can use *Vata* in various disease conditions. In this regard further researches are to be

carried out to explore *Vata* for its potency towards pharmacological properties and actions.

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