

Vanauşadhivarga in the light of Amarakoşodghāţana of Kşīrasvāmin the earliest extant full commentary on Amarakoşā

Dr. V. Yamuna Devi[†]

Sanskrit lexicons in majority deal with either synonyms or homonyms while some deal with both. The words are arranged subject-wise, with further subdivisions based on grouping of words of one, two, three and more syllables or by the first or the final syllable.

The domain of Koşā literature is also of varied types. Many well-known Koşas as Amarakoşā, Abhidhānaratnamālā and Vaijayantīkoşā deal with synonyms and homonyms of profession, occupation, cosmology, flora, fauna, and human body and so on.

The popularity of Amarakoşā (AK) (6 th C.A.D) is evident from the fact that it has more than eighty commentaries. Amarakoşodghāţana (AKU) by Kşīrasvāmin (K) of 11th C. A.D. is the earliest fully extant commentary on the AK. The commentary is lucid and simple. It quotes more than hundred authorities.

Koşas like Dhanvantari Nighaᅇᅇu, Śivakoşā of Śivadatta and Aşţāᅇga Nighaᅇᅇu of Vāhaᅇa or Vāgbhaᅇa, have for their domain, synonyms of plants and herbs, vegetables and mineral substances and their medicinal properties.

[†] Assistant Professor, The Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, University of Madras, Chennai.

Realizing the indispensability of plants that form the basis for the existence of life forces on earth, AK has allotted an exclusive and exhaustive section for the plant kingdom namely the Vanaśadhivarga. Apart from Vanaśadhivarga, other sections like Vārivarga, Nāvarga and Vaiçyavarga also have information on plants.

The etymologies of the commentary, AKU reveal that some of the synonyms are morphological definitions of trees and plants, while some are physiological. This gives a special dimension to the text by making it a Botanical encyclopaedia more than a lexicographical text.

Amarasimha seems to have registered every essential and popular species of plant kingdom with cogency.

As already mentioned though there are eighty and more commentaries on AK, AKU is exclusive in many ways. One important feature is that this is the only commentary dealing with the Vanaśadhivarga in a scientific aura. Though there are a few commentaries like vyākhyāsudhā of Bhanuji, all mechanically give only the etymologies while only AKU provides the botanical and medicinal information. Also the commentator K aptly supports his views and adds a new impetus to the different aspects of Botany.

The AK (II.4.5)^१ lists 13 synonyms to denote a tree. K's explanations to the terms opens the gate-way to the Indian understanding of the Botanical world. For instance the word pādapaḥ suggests that it sucks water through its roots - पादैर्मूलैः पिबति पादपः एवमङ्घ्रिपः चरणपश्च प्रसिद्धः, other synonyms of the same sense is also added by K as aṅghripaḥ and caraṇapaḥ. The word taru denotes that the trees aid in overcoming the heat, avenue of trees help in reducing the temperature is indicated by the word taru - taranti anena ātapam.

The list of trees and their other synonyms cited from Dhanvantari Nighaṇṭu by K is worth observing as these synonyms provide actually the morphology of

१ वृक्षो महीरूहः शाखी विटपी पादपस्तरुः। अनोकहः कुटः शालः पलाशी द्वु द्रुमाजगमाः॥

the tree. The additional names of trees from Dhanvantari Nighaṇṭu adds more value to the commentary. K rightly observes that the names of the trees are derived from the utility of their sap, potency or reaction of the root, fruit or flower with respect to its form, place or time - रसवीर्यविपाकेभ्यो मूलात्पूष्पत्फलाद्दलात्। आकरद्देशकालादेर्वनौषध्यर्थमुन्नयेत्॥ Also K specifies that the mythological names are not mentioned here in the text for they have no purpose or utility in the context while he explains the terms of Bodhi tree - केशवावासमङ्गल्यादयोऽत्राल्पप्रयोग्तवान्नोक्ताः। एवमुत्तरत्र।

From this statement it is inferred that this section deals with common trees used for medicinal purpose. To understand these aspects, synonyms of a few trees and their explanations provided by K shall be presented here.

1. *Bodhi*: (AK. II. 4. 20; p. 84)^१ - Holy Fig tree:

Each word explained by K is as follows - Though Pipal's popular synonyms are Pippala and Aśvattha, the particular mention of Bodhi draws attention from K. He says that it is endowed with energy to enlighten or impart knowledge and thus beneficial in all aspects - बोधिद्रुमो बिधिस्तवाख्यः सर्वोपकरित्वात्।

Caladala: K observes that the stalk of the leaf is thin and the leaf being thick is wafted gently by breeze. He explains that the leaves in contact with each other makes a clapping noise and earns the name caladala - तनुवृन्तवात् गुरुपर्णत्वात् स्वल्पेऽपि वाते चलदलः। Apaplava: Apaplava means 'that which leaps' The seeds leap and grow on any surface. kuñjarāśanaḥ - as it is the favourite of the elephants.

Aśvattha propagates by taking anything as its substratum and starts growing there. Probably the etymologists refer to this characteristic feature of tree.

Patrāṇi - The leaves of Aśvattha are thick in nature with its conspicuous form of pointed tip. K notes that based on this feature the Fig tree is called Patrāṇi in Deśī language. He points out that the local (Deśī) names are also essentially to

^१ बोधिद्रुमश्चलदलः पिप्पलः कुञ्जराशनः॥ अश्वत्थेऽथ...

be known for it is this which is in common currency among the folk, triblas, forestdwellers, cowherds and the common people who are experts in identifying them. Thus he emphasises that the Deśī names are also to be known which is acknowledged by Dhanvantari too in his DN (I.8) is cited - प्रायो जनाः सन्तित्रेचराद्या गोपाद् प्राकृतनामज्ञाः। प्रयोजनार्था वचनप्रवृत्तिर्यतस्ततः प्राकृत इत्यदोषः।

2. *Kapittha* - Woodapple (AK. II.4.21)^१

K explains that it is the monkeys favourite fruit and called so - कपिषु तिष्ठति कपित्थः कपिप्रियत्वात्। It is called dadhiphala as it is kept in the curds, probably preserved in curds - दधि तिष्ठति दधित्थो दधिफलत्वात्। It affects the teeth as it is tooth sensitive - dantaśaṭha - दन्तेषु शठोम्लत्वात्। and is aphrodisiac in nature - manmatha - मन्मथो मदनाख्यययि णोक्तः। K adds that it is also called madana. It is also called Puṣpaphala. K cites the DN (II.102) - कपित्थोऽथ द्रदित्थस्तु ग्राही फलसुगन्धकः। अक्षस्यदो दधिफलश्चिरपाकी कपिप्रियः॥

In this context K cites the dvyyarthakośa too where Puṣpaphala denotes both wood apple and pumpkin - ध्वर्थे पुष्पफलः कूष्माण्डः कपित्थश्च।

3. *Udumbara* - Fig Tree (AK. II.4.22)^२

It is called so as it has hollow stem - उल्लङ्घिताम्बर उदुम्बरः, the flower in which the wasp is captured when ripens has in it the tiny insects and so jantuphala - मशकगर्भाणि फलान्यस्य जन्तुफलः कृमिफलः पर्यायेणोक्तः। the twigs are used in sacrifices and hence yajñāṅgaka, the leaves and stem exude a white or yellow latex and hence -hemadugdha. They produce two crops a year and hence called sadāphala. The bark is greyish in colour and thus called śvetavalka.

१ कपित्थे स्युर दधित्थग्राहि मन्मथाः। तस्मिन् दधिफलः पुष्पफल दन्तशाठावपि॥

२ उदुम्बरो जन्तुफलो यज्ञाङ्गो हेमदुग्धकः।

K cites DN (5.83) - क्षीरवृक्षे हेमदुग्ध इदुम्बरसदाफलौ। अपुष्पफलसम्बद्धो यज्ञाङ्गी श्वेतवल्कलः॥ The text of Indu is also cited by K - उदुम्बरस्तु यज्ञाङ्गः सुचक्षुः श्वेतवल्कलः। हेमदुग्धः कृमिफलः क्षीरवृक्षः स काञ्चनः॥

4. *Kovidāra* - Mountain ebony (AK. II.4. 22cd)[†]

Is said to split open the soil - कोर्भूमेर्विदारणात्कोविदारः। camarika - the flower is orchid like with brilliant long red stamens protruding out ressembling a chamara - चमरोऽस्याति चमरिकः। yugapatrika as their leaves are bilobed like butterfly wings.

K quotes DN (I.196) - कोविदारोऽथ कुद्दालः कुदारः कुण्डली कुली। ताम्रपुष्पश्चामरिको महायमलपत्रकः॥

5. *Saptaparna* - *Alstonia Scholaris* (AK. II.4. 23ab)[‡]

It has seven leaves - आहुश्च सप्तपर्णो बृहत्त्वकः सप्ताह्यो गुच्छपुष्पकः। सप्तच्छदः सप्तपत्रो युग्मपत्रो बहुच्छदः॥ or it has cluster of leaves in odd number from 7-10 and so called as viṣamacchadaḥ; viśālatvak - Its broad bark in olden days was used to make slates for children. It flourishes in the śarad and hence śārado.

6. *Āragvadha* (AK. II. 9. 23-4; p. 85)[‡]

Cassia Fistula: This tree has many therapeutic values in Ayurveda and used in curing various diseases hence the name says K - आसमन्ताद्गुजां वधोऽत्रारग्वधः आरमन्न जयन्त्यारजो मलास्तेषां वधोऽत्रेति वा। also termed rājavṛkṣa - a majestic tree as it cures acute diseases - राजा चासौ वृक्षश्च रोगराजं वृश्चति वा राजवृक्षः. It puts forth leguminous pods and hence called śamyāka- शमीं शिम्बिमकति शम्याकः According to K the synonym caturaṅgula is denotive of the long leguminous pod perhaps measuring upto four aṅgulas - चतुरङ्गुलपर्वा

† कोविदरे चमरिकः कुद्दालो युगपत्रकः॥

‡ सप्तपर्णो विशालत्वक् शारदो विषमच्छदः।

‡ आरग्वधे ताजवृक्ष शम्याकचतुरङ्गुलाः। आरेवत व्याधिघात कृतमालसुवर्णकाः।

According to K the asterism Revatī is the Goddess of diseases and hence

the synonym ārevata-that which cures fever - रेवती रोगदेवता अरेवत्याम् भव आरेवतः। आरेवते ज्वरोऽनेन् वा। रेवृ प्लवगतौ। Its cluster of flower appears like a beautiful garland and hence termed kṛtamāla - कृता मालास्या कृतमालः उत्तमिमत एव सकर्णिकत्वात्।

Again K cites DN (I.221, 219) - आह च कर्णिकारो राजवृक्षः प्रमहः क्र ६ इतमालकः। आरोग्यशिम्बी शम्बाको व्याधिघातोपघातकः॥ आरग्वधो दीर्घफलो व्याघातश्चतुरङ्गुलः। आरेवतस्तथा कर्णी कर्णीवान् स च रेवतः॥

In this paper an attempt is made to bring forth the value of AKU the commentary on AK not only as a commentarial text but also as a text providing valuable information from the point of view of Botany and Āyurveda.

Mallikā (II. 4. 70; p.98) - Jasmine: The jasmine family as a whole has many species which vary in size, shape and to a certain extent colour. They are shrubs as well as creepers. Indian Materia Medica also lists different varieties of jasmine under Jasmine family.

(i) The inflorescence of Jasmine stand conspicuously at the end of its shoots. K alludes the name mallikā with this feature. Some species of Jasmine when in contact with earth puts forth roots. K being a keen observer, perhaps refers to this - तृणशूले गुल्मे साधु तृणशूल्यम्। मल्लयते मूर्ध्नि। He also quotes Dhanvantari to support his views. (ii) Jasmine being the seasonal flower of summer is śītabhīru or opposed to winter. (iii) The aromatic nature of the flower is also highlighted with many self-explanatory synonyms. Suvahā refers to the fragrant quality of the flower and always sought after by the bees. This quality renders Jasmine the name śephālikā - शेरते शेफा अलयोऽस्या शेफालीका। (iv) Geographical occurrence of jasmine in plentitude in the Magadha region is also pointed out by K denoting his knowledge of Indian geography - मगधदेशे भवा मागधी। Likewise puṇḍraka is that which is indigenous of Puṇḍra deśa - पुण्ड्रदेशे भवः पुण्ड्रकः। (v) Aphrodisiac nature of Jasmine is reflected by the term gaṇikā, mādhavī

and atimukta. The ensnaring quality is on par with the attraction for gaṇikā, allures even the renounced atimukta - अतिक्रान्तो मुक्तान् विरक्तान्तिमुक्तः। Understandably mādhavī blossoms in spring - मधौ वसन्ते भवा माधवी। (vi) Though pure white in colour generally some of the species of jasmine carry a tinge of yellow or pink borders at the petals and hence named variedly.

Shrubs:

Kuraṅṭaka (II. 6. 74; p. 99): The yellow variety of amlāna is never fading as the name denotes. K rightly observes that Vātsyāyana suggests that a garland of kuruṅṭaka was to adorn certain parts of the body (a k ūrcakasthāna) कुरण्टको हि म्लानिं न गच्छति तेनाम्लानः। वात्स्यायनोऽत एव कूर्चकस्थाने कुरण्टकमलाचेत्याह।

Herbs:

Ajamodā (II. 4. 145; p. 117): AK mentions ajamodā, ugragandhā brahmadarbhā and yavānikā as synonyms. K suggests that the word must be yamāni interpreting “it as that which causes indigestion”. Also he points out that ajamodā, is quite different from yavāni and quotes Dhanvantari Nighaṅṭu (II. 91). Though they are phonetically similar one should not be mistaken for the other and remarks that Amarasimha's reading of both the words as synonyms is erroneous - यच्छत्यग्निमान्द्यं यमानी पूर्वोक्तापीह शाकत्वात् पुनरुक्ता यवानीं मत्वा वा ग्रन्थकृद् भ्रान्तः। आह च - यवानी दीप्यको दीप्यो यवसाह्वय नामकः यमानिकोगेअगन्धो च दीपनीया च दीपनी। पूर्वोक्ता हि खराश्वैवाजमोदा ब्रह्मकुशा च। तथा चेन्वैद्याः = अजमोदा ब्रह्मकुशा खराश्वो लोचमर्कटः। वल्लीमोदा वस्तमोदा सैव हस्तिमयूरकः।

The Ayurvedic physicians⁸ also endorse that ajamodā and yavāni are different herbs. They also suggest that both these plants and their fruits are similar in appearance but ajamodā is not as pungent as yavāni.

⁸ *Dravyaguṇavijñāna*, p. 266

Gojihvā (II. 4. 120; p. 111): Gojihvā also called dārvikā is said to cure many diseases. K observes this to be a variety of Oñadhi - दारयति रोगान् दार्वी औषधिविशेषः।

Common weed:

Citrā (II. 4. 157; p. 120) - Indian wild gourd or bitter apple: AK gives citrā as synonym of gavākṣī viśālā and indravāruṇī. K remarks that reading the dvyarthakoṇa (II. 68), Amara has mistaken citrā for viśālā. K cites Dhanvantari (I. 248) who does not mention the two as synonyms. He tries to justify this reading of Amara by suggesting that viśālā is a variety of gavākṣī and that the term viśālā is indicative of a big fruit - आह च - ऐन्द्रीवारुणी द्राक्षा इन्द्रेर्वारुवृषादनी। गवादनी क्षुद्रफला वृषभाषी गवाक्ष्यपि। व्यर्थे चित्रा विशाला द्रवन्ती चेति विशालायाश्चित्रत्वाद् भ्रान्तो ग्रन्थकृद्। गवाक्षी विशेषो वा विशालेति न दोषः। विशाला महाफलत्वात्। आह च - अन्येन्द्रवारुणी प्रोक्ता विशाला तु महाफला। आत्मरक्षा चित्रफला तुवसी त्रपुषी च सा। आह च - ऐन्द्रीवारुणी द्राक्षा इन्द्रेर्वारुवृषादनी। गवादनी क्षुद्रफला वृषभाक्षी गवाक्ष्यपि। व्यर्थे चित्रा विशाला द्रवन्ति चेति विशालायाश्चित्रत्वाद् भ्रान्तो ग्रन्थकृद्। गवाक्षी विशेषो वा विशालेति न दोषः। विशाला महाफलत्वात्। आह च - अन्येन्द्रवारुणी प्रोक्ता विशाला तु महाफला। आत्मरक्षा चित्रफला तुवसी त्रपुषी च सा। आह च - ऐन्द्रीवारुणी द्राक्षा इन्द्रेर्वारुवृषादनी। गवादनी क्षुद्रफला वृषभाक्षी गवाक्ष्यपि। व्यर्थे चित्रा विशाला द्रवन्ति चेति विशालायाश्चित्रत्वाद् भ्रान्तो ग्रन्थकृद्। गवाक्षी विशेषो वा विशालेति न दोषः। विशाला महाफलत्वात्। आह च - अन्येन्द्रवारुणी प्रोक्ता विशाला तु महाफला। आत्मरक्षा चित्रफला तुवसी त्रपुषी च सा।

Roots:

Citrā (II. 4. 88; p. 103): Upacitrā is given as a synonym of citrā. Citing Dhanvantari Nighaṇṭu (I. 229) K observes that in the dvyarthakoṣa (2/60) upacitrā denotes danté and remarks that Amara has mistaken dantī for dravantī - आह च - द्रवन्ती शंवरी चित्रा न्यग्रोधी मूशिकाह्वया। प्रत्येकश्रेणी वृषा चण्डा पुत्रश्रेण्याखुष्णिका। व्यर्थे उपचित्रा दन्ती पृश्निपणिरि चेति दन्त्यां द्रवन्ती भ्रान्त्या ग्रन्थकदुप्चित्रामाह।

Viśvā (II. 4. 100; p. 106)[‡] - Aconitum heterophyllum: AK mentions viśvā and mahauśadha as other synonyms of viśvā. K observes that in Dhanvantari Nighaṇṭu (I. 10) mahauśadha is not mentioned as a synonym of viśā or viśvā and that in the tryarthakoṣa too mahauśadha is used to denote viṣam and not viśā which is mistaken by Amara - आह च - अतिविषा शिल्लकन्दा ज्ञेया विश्वा च भङ्गुरा। श्यामकन्दा प्रतिविषा शृङ्गी चोपविषा विषा तथा। महौषधं तु विषं नातिविषा। त्र्यर्थे तु हि महौषधं विषं शुण्ठी लशुनं चेति। विषा शब्दं बुद्धा भ्रान्तोऽयम्।

Puṣkaramūla (II. 4. 146; p. 117): AK gives kaśmīra and padmapatra as other synonyms. K remarks that Amara has mistaken padmavarṇa for padmaparṇa and thus gives padmapatra - पुष्करमूले त्रीणी नामानी। पद्मपत्रमिति ग्रन्थकृद् भ्रान्तः पद्मपर्णमिति बुद्धवान्। काश्मीरं पुष्करजटा धीरं तद्पद्मव्रणकम्।

Kṣīrāvī (II. 4. 100; p. 106): AK gives Kṣīrāvī and dugdhikā as synonyms. K quotes from Dhanvantari Nighaṇṭu (I. 134) and observes that the physicians read the text as kṣīra and vikarikā but the author of AK reads these words as kṣīrāvī and vikarikā- आह च - “द्वितीया कशीरकाकोली कशीरशुल्ला पयिस्वनी। पयस्या कशीरमधुरा वीरा कशीराविकारिका॥ ट्ट अत्र कशीरावी वीकारिकेति च ग्रन्थकृन्मन्यते। कशीरेति विकारिकेति तु वैद्याः। आह च - इत्तद्वितीया कशीरकाकोली कशीरशुल्ला पयिस्वनी। पयस्या कशीरमधुरा वीरा कशीराविकारिका॥” अत्र कशीरावी वीकारिकेति च ग्रन्थकृन्मन्यते। कशीरेति विकारिकेति तु वैद्याः।

Bulbs and tubers:

Palāṇḍu (II .4. 148; p. 118) - Onion: Palāṇḍu is a bulb which has certain aroma. It is also known as latārka and dudruma. K specifies that the green onion is latārka and the bluish variety is lavatārka - तत्र हिते तत्र नीले पलाण्डौ लताकौ लवताकार्यः।

[‡] ivñā iv; a àitiv; a Aitiv; aepiv; aé[fa, z&¼l mhaE; x<

K explains that it is also called dudruma as it is inauspicious probably referring to the custom that the onions are debarred in religious cuisines, especially cuisine intended for manes - दुष्टो द्रुमोऽपवित्रत्वात्।

K observes that Dhanvantari (IV. 71) calls them commonly as bhavanēṣṭa mukunda and mukhadūṣaka referring to its bad odour. He accepts the green variety as latārka and dudruma. He is silent about the blue variety - धन्वन्त्रिस्त्वभेदेनाह - पलाण्डुर्भवनेष्टश्च मुकुन्दो मुखदूषकः। ह्णिणोन्य पलाण्डुस्तु लतार्को दुद्रुमश्च सः।

Śuśruta speaks of 10 varieties of onion. He names them as follows - 1) laśuna 2) dīrghapatra 3) picagandha 4) mahauṣadha 5) pharaṇa 6) palāṇḍu 7) lavatārka 8) aparājita 9) grñjana 10) yavanēṣṭa.

Even in modern Botany, both garlic and onion are grouped together since they belong to the same family liliacea, their morphology being similar. Grñjana is a small red coloured variety of garlic. Due to the medicinal property contained in them their grouping is justified.

Mushrooms:

Though mushrooms fall under separate phylum fungi, Amarasimha has listed it amidst grasses. Mushrooms habitat on trees, and in between grasses. This could be the reason for mushrooms, the lower form of plant kingdom to be listed along with grass family.

Chattrā (II. 4. 167; p. 123) - Fungi: By chattrā and atichattrā, as K rightly observes, the umbrella like feature of mushrooms is depicted - छत्राकारस्तृण्डिवशेषच्छत्रा अतिक्रान्तरच्छत्रास्तिछत्रः। Mushrooms may be edible and non- edible, the latter being very poisonous and results in the death when consumed. Perhaps K refers to the non-edible variety when he describes its harmful nature and adds that the pungency kills the consumer - पारुष्याद् पालं हन्ति। K has included kavaka to denote mushroom - कवकम् छत्रिका।

Grasses:

A fitting finale for the Vanaśadhi varga happens to be the grass family. **Gundra** (II. 4. 162; p. 122): Darbha grass is known as gundra. K remarks that gundra is a popular variety of darbha grass - गुन्द्रो दर्भविशेषे रूढः। यदाहुः - दभरणं स्थाने शरैः प्रस्त्रितव्यम्। (b) Çara is yet another grass which can be substituted for darbha. (c) Aromatic grass varieties are vividly described as Vīraṇām vīrataram uśīram abhayam naladam amṛṇālaṁ and jalāśaya. These occur in different parts of India, some indigenous only to northern India.

K has pointed out that Amarasimha has not distinguished between uśīra, lāmajjaka and amṛṇala since they are distinctly different species of grass and they do not warrant their placing as synonyms.

Amṛṇala in Dvyarthakoṇa denotes lāmajjaka as well as uśīra. Sevyā also denotes the two. This led Amara to deduce amṛṇala and sevyā as synonyms - वृथेऽमृणालं लामज्जकमुशीरं च। तथा सेव्यं लामज्जकमुशीरं चेति। ग्रन्थकृत्तु सेव्यामृणालयोर्नलदोशीरैकार्थत्वाद् भ्रान्तः।

Findings or Result

Thus every etymological explanation of the commentary throws light on the botanical aspect of the tree. Thus the study of every word in the Vanaśadhivarga in the light of K s commentary makes us understand the scientific information in the AK better.

In addition, the commentary, AKU cites extensively from the Dhanvantari Nighaṇṭu and other medicinal texts which help in

- 1) Understanding the Indian system of Botany
- 2) To assimilate the medicinal value of the plant world and
- 3) Reconstructing or verifying the lost texts or ancient texts like Dhanvantari Nighaṇṭu, dvyarthakosa, candra's text etc.
- 4) The commentator does not spare the text when it is wrong. Corrections are made wherever necessary in the original text.

In this paper an attempt is made to bring forth the value of AKU the commentary on AK not only as a commentarial text but also as a text providing valuable information from the point of view of Botany and Āyurveda.