

## BIOGRAPHY OF NARAHARI- THE AUTHOR OF RĀJA-NIGHAṆṬU

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### ABSTRACT

*Narahari Paṇḍita*, who was the son of *Īśvarasūri* and resident of Kashmir was an erudite scholar of all branches of Sanskrit learning and was also well versed in regional languages of Karnataka, Maharastra and Andhra. His work *Rāja-Nighaṇṭu* is also known as *Nighaṇṭu Rāja* or *Abhidhāna Cūḍāmaṇi*. His date may be placed in 17th century A.D. i.e. after *Bhāvamiśra*. Some of the new and more interesting plants added are, *Brahmadaṇḍī*, *Dhūmrapatra*, *Ēkavīra*, *Hastīsuṇḍī*, *Jambu*, *Jhaṇḍu*, *Samudraphala*, *Śvētāmlī*, *Śvētā*, *Vṛścikā* etc. Thus information about *Narahari* and his work is presented in this article.

### Introduction

*Nighaṇṭu* is indispensable equipment for practicing physician. It is said that “The physician without *Nighaṇṭu* would come to ridicule, like a scholar without grammar and an archer without practice”.

*Nighaṇṭu* is vocabulary, glossary; ‘A collection of names’ (*Nāma-Saṅgraha*), according to Hemachandra. Its original significance was a list of Vedic words like *Aupamanyava* and *Yāska*.

*Rāja-Nighaṇṭu* is also known as *Nighaṇṭu Rāja* or *Abhidhāna Cūḍāmaṇi*. It is the largest extant lexicon of materia medica. It deals with the names and properties of medicinal substances, as well as with a series of related subjects. Its author is *Narahari Paṇḍita*, who was the son of *Īśvarasūri* and resident of Kashmir. He was an erudite scholar of all branches of Sanskrit learning and was also well versed in regional languages of Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra.

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### About the author

Author in the colophon to his work introduces himself as *Narahari*, *Narasimha*, *Nṛhari* and *Nṛsimha* and as son of *Īsvarasūri*. He belongs to a Kashmiri royal family of *Sōmānandācārya* and took part in war like activities. In the prefatory verses *Narahari* says that he wrote this book incorporating in it the synonyms of drugs prevalent in Karnataka and Maharashtra. This statement proves that his ancestors or himself had migrated from Kashmir and settled in Northern part of Karnataka. His favorite deities were *Śiva* and *Pārvatī*. There is reason to believe this that the author might have taken to the life of an ascetic in a *Śaiva* Mutt. Details of these facts are yet to be explored. Additional information is found in the colophons of some other manuscripts that, *Narahari* was the son of *Īsvarasūri* a physician who was also called *Candēśvara* and the disciple of *Amṛteśānanda* who belonged to the *Śiṣyaparamparā* of *Sōmānanda*. He was a resident of Simhapura in Kashmir.

*Narahari* is credited with two more medical works, *Guṇasārasamuccaya* and the *Vāgbhaṭanandana*. But it is believed that the latter is by different *Narahari*.

### Date

The date of the work is hard to ascertain, but 17<sup>th</sup> century has been suggested as the probable date. The terminus post quem of *Rāja Nighaṇṭu* can be deduced from the sources mentioned by the author. Latest is the *Madanpāla Nighaṇṭu*, composed in 1375 A.D. *Narahari* referred *Madanpāla*, hence his date must be after 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. His date must also be posterior to *Bhāvaprakāśa* because drugs like *Karpūra Taila*, *Jhaṇḍu* etc were mentioned in it. There is a verse which is identical found in *Rāja Nighaṇṭu* and *Bhāvaprakāśa*. It might had been borrowed by *Narahari* hence he may be placed in 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. i. e. posterior to *Bhāvamiśra*. The terminus ante quem is provided by quotations in two works dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, *Bhānujī Dikṣita*'s commentary on the *Amarakōśa* (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century) and Raghunatha's *Bhōjanakutuhala*.

Description of *Jhaṇḍu* (*Tegetes erecta*) is important as it is a clue to the date of the *Rāja-Nighaṇṭu*, provided that, P. V. Sharma is right in his identification and his claim that it was introduced into India at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. P. Hymavathi views that

the date of the author of the *Rāja-Nighaṇṭu* based on self conviction that *Narahari* was a disciple of *Śrikāntha Paṇḍita*, the *Śuddha Śaiva* and medical author. She asserts that *Narahari* or *Narasimha* hailed from a *Brāhmaṇa* family adhering to the Kashmir school of Saivism, which was introduced in the Southern part of India after the establishment of Mohammedan rule in the North. The date of *Śrikāntha Paṇḍita* is 1300-1360 AD and the fact that the *Rāja-Nighaṇṭu* is later than the *Madanapāla Nighaṇṭu* made her to conclude that the former work must have been written shortly after the latter, towards the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. P. Hymavathi identifies *Narahari's* patron as *Narasimha* -IV who ruled in *Kaliṅga* between 1378-1409 A.D.

Absence of mention of opium decides its date to be earlier than 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. But most of the historians consider 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. as the date of *Narahari*.

The evidence available however, points to the fifteenth or sixteenth century as the period of composition of the *Rāja-Nighaṇṭu*. The identity of *Jhaṇḍu* and *Himavallī* and the date of their introduction into India, may prove to be clues enabling us to narrow the limits.

### About the work

*Rāja-Nighaṇṭu* is also called *Abhidhāna Cūdāmaṇi*; it is an elaborate work designed to be a Compendium of the names and medicinal properties of substances (*Dravyābhidhāna-Guṇasaṃgraha*).

It consists of about 3,300 verses arranged in twenty three Vargas (group) or chapters. It precedes by an introduction followed by a section on *Ēkārthas* and *Anēkarthas*. In his introduction he addresses a salutation to Lord *Śiva*, *Brahma*, *Indra*, the *Aśvins*, *Ātrēya*, *Dhanvantari*, *Caraka* and *Suśruta*.

The work as admitted by the author, follows closely the views of *Dhanvantarīya-Nighaṇṭu* (or *Dravyāvalī*), which was the first medical glossary and listed more than 370 medical flora (*dravyas*) and gave along with their names and synonyms, brief descriptions of their pharmacological characteristics. It provided the model as well as the inspiration for later glossaries.

The author *Narahari* declares to have collected all those names of medicinal substances which are useful to a physician, regardless of their origin from Sanskrit, Prakrit etc. He announced his intention to describe the drugs according to their traditional usage, local names special characteristics, properties and names employed in foreign countries. A short table of contents is found at the end of the introduction. The first few chapters have no parallel in other *Nighaṅṭus*.

Chapter one (*Ānūpādi varga*) carries 39 verses and is concerned with the characteristics of the various types of country and soil, the deities presiding over the types of soil, the characteristics and uses of trees and other kinds of plants and their products as dependent on the type of soil they are growing on, the characteristics of plants considered to be of the male, female or bisexual and the relationship between parts of plants and the five *Mahābhūtas*.

Chapter two (*Dharaṇyādi varga*) deals with synonyms for earth, mountain, forest etc. it also contains a list of *Nakṣatra vrkṣa*.

Chapters three to thirteen enumerates the names and properties of medicinal substances arranged in the following groups; *Guḍūcyādi*, *Śatāhvādi*, *Parpaṭādi*, *Pippalyādi*, *Mūlakādi*, *Śālmalyādi*, *Pāribhadrādi*, *Karavīrādi*, *Āmrādi*, *Candanādi* and *Suvarṇādi*.

Chapter fourteen to seventeen (*Pāṇiyādi varga*, *Kṣīrādi varga*, *Śalyādi varga*, *Māmsādi varga*) deals with articles of food, water, the sugarcane and its products, types of sugar derived from other plants than the sugarcane, honey and alcoholic drinks; milk and other dairy produce, *Kāñjika* and similar products of acid fermentation, urines and oils; grain and pulses; meat etc.

Chapter eighteen (*Manuṣyādi varga*) is about names of human beings, anatomical terms and some related subjects.

Chapter nineteen (*Siṃhādi varga*) is about the names and synonyms of forty eight animals.

Chapter twenty (*Rōgādi varga*) is about names of diseases about medicinal preparations, the tastes and their combinations etc. The two series of *Aṣṭāṅgas* (eight divisions) of *Āyurvēda* are also mentioned here.

Chapter twenty one (*Sattvādi varga*) is about three *Guṇas* and the character of human beings dominated by one of these, the three *Dōṣas* and the constitutions, weights and measures, divisions of time, the quarters of the sky etc.

Chapter twenty two (*Miśrakādi varga*) about groups of medicinal substances.

Three *Lōhas* - *Suvarṇa* (gold), *Rajata* ( silver), *Tāmra* (copper)

Five *Lōhas* - Above three and *Vaṅga* (tin), *Nāga* (lead)

Eight *Lōhas* - Above five and *Kānta*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Tikṣṇaka* (varieties of iron) are added.

*Mahārasas* - 8

*Sāmānya rasas* - 8

*Kṣāra* (alkali) - 10 (derived from *Śigru*, *Mūlaka*, *Palāśa*, *Cukrikā*, *Ārdraka*, *Nimba*, *Ikṣu*, *Śaikharika* and *Mōcika*) mentioned in this *Nighaṇṭu*.

The work ends with *Ēkārthas* and *Anēkārthas*. The latter being divided into groups of names having two up to eleven meanings.

The way of presentation of *Rāja-Nighaṇṭu*, especially that of the *Prastāvanā* and the concluding verses of each *varga* is rather ornate. The arrangement of the medicinal substances differs considerably from that found in the *Dhanvantarīya Nighaṇṭu* apart from the contents of a few *Vargas* notably the *Śatāhvādi* and *Candanādi varga*.

A conspicuous feature is the mention of the number of synonyms at the end of each series. The *Rāja-Nighaṇṭu* describes more medicinal substances than the *Dhanvantarīya Nighaṇṭu* and distinguishes a larger number of varieties. On the other hand a small number of drugs included in the *Dhanvantarīya Nighaṇṭu* are absent in *Rāja-Nighaṇṭu* eg. *Śvāsāri*, *Kāsaghñī*, *Vijayā*, *Śvētapuṣpī*, *Girisindūra Vaṭasaugandhika*, *Jalapippalī* etc.

Sources mentioned by the author of the *Rāja-Nighaṇṭu* in the introductory verses are *Dhanvantarīya Nighaṇṭu*, the works of *Madana* and *Halāyudha*, the *Viṣvaprakāśa*, *Amarakōśa* and the *Sēṣarāja*. Some more works referred to are *Bṛhatsūtra*, *Nārādīya (Tantra)* and *Nārāyaṇī*.

### Special features of *Rāja-Nighaṇṭu*

It is understood that, the basis for this *Nighaṇṭu* is *Dhanvantari Nighaṇṭu*, *Madanapāla Nighaṇṭu*, *Halāyudha*, *Viśvaprakāśa*, *Amarakośa*, *Trikāṇḍaśeṣa*, *Rāja kośa* etc. Mostly it is based on *Dhanvantarīya-Nighaṇṭu*. Narahari was famous for his contribution towards *Āyurvēda* especially *Dravyaguṇa*, the *Āyurvēdic* pharmacology. *Rāja-Nighaṇṭu* was probably the first to accord the prime important place to the subject of *Dravyaguṇa* and placed it ahead of all the branches of *Āyurvēda*.

*Dravyābhīdhānagadaniścayakāyasaukhyaṃ śālyādibhūtaviśagrahabālavaidyam  
Vidyādrasāyanavaram dṛḍhadēhahētumāyusrutērdvicaturamihāha śambhuḥ*

-*Rāja-Nighaṇṭu* 20/58.

In twentieth chapter *Narahari* mentions the two series of the *Aṣṭāṅgas* (eight divisions) of *Āyurvēda* viz *Dravyābhīdhāna* (pharmacology), *Gadaniścaya* (diagnostics), *Kāya* (therapeutics), *Śalya* (surgery), *Bhūta* (psychotherapy), *Graha*, *Viśa* (toxicology), *Bālavaidya* (paediatrics) and places *Dravyaguṇa* in the first place. In the second series *Śalya*, *Śālākya* (diseases of head and neck), *Kāya*, *Bhūta*, *Viśa*, *Bāla*, *Rasāyana* (rejuvenation therapy) and *Vṛṣya* (aphrodisiacs) were mentioned.

*Nighaṇṭu* carries the classification of drugs, their description, synonyms varieties, properties etc. and it is so elaborate. Drugs with equal properties are grouped and the name of the group is based on important drug amongst them. For example, *Gudūcyādi*, *Candanādi* etc.

*Śthāvara dravyas* are classified into five categories viz. *Vanaspati*, *Vānaspatya*, *Kṣupa*, *Vallī*, *Āuśadhi*. Last one is again divided into male, female and unisexual.

The number of medicinal substances described in the *Rāja-Nighaṇṭu* and absent from the *Dhanvantari Nighaṇṭu* is too large to be enumerated. Some of the new and more interesting plants added are, *Brahmadaṇḍī*, *Dhūmrapatra*, *Ēkavīra*, *Hastīsuṇḍī*, *Jambu*, *Jhaṇḍu*, *Samudraphala*, *Śvētāmlī*, *Śvētā*, *Vṛścika* etc.

New varieties added by the author of the *Rāja-Nighaṇṭu* to those described in the *Dhanvantarīya-Nighaṇṭu* are also rather numerous. Some of these are, *Bṛhat Jīvanti*

(a variety of *Jivantī*), *Kaiḍarya* (a variety of *Nimba*), *Karkaṭī* (a variety of *Trapuṣa*), *Tāmrakaṇṭaka* (a variety of *Khadira*), *Vaṭapaṭrī* (a variety of *Pāṣāṇabhēdaka*), *Viṭkhadira* (a variety of *Khadira*). In chapter twenty two the *Aṣṭāṅgas* (eight divisions) of *Āyurvēda* were mentioned. Chapter twenty two enumerates three groups of *Lōhas* (metals) etc.

This work has been printed at Anandasrama, Pune in 1925 and at Calcutta in 1933.

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## सारांश

### राजनिघण्टु के लेखक नरहरि की जीवनी

पी.वी.वी. प्रसाद एवं अला नारायण

काश्मीर के निवासी नरहरि पण्डित ईश्वरसूरी के पुत्र थे। वह संस्कृत ज्ञान की सभी शाखाओं के पण्डित थे। वह कर्नाटक, महाराष्ट्र और आन्ध्रप्रदेश की क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं में निष्णात थे। उनकी कृति को राजनिघण्टु एवं अभिधान चिन्तामणि के नाम से भी जाना जाता है। इनका काल भावमिश्र के पश्चात् १७ वीं शताब्दी में निर्धारित किया गया है। इस ग्रन्थ में कतिपय नवीन और अधिक रोचक पादप जैसे ब्रह्मदन्ती, धूम्रपत्र, एकवीर, हस्तिशुण्डी, जम्बु, झण्डु, समुद्रफल, श्वेताम्ली, श्वेता, वृश्चिका आदि को सम्मिलित किया गया है। अतः इस लेख में नरहरि और उनके कार्य को प्रस्तुत किया गया है।