



Review Article

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BĀKUCĪ (*PSORALEA CORYLIFOLIA* LINN.) AND ITS CLASSICAL ĀYURVEDIC AND ETHNOMEDICINAL USES: A CRITICAL REVIEW

Jigyasa Pathak^{1*}, Rabinarayan Acharya²

¹MD Scholar, Dept. of Dravyaguna, I.P.G.T. & R.A., Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar, Gujarat, India

²Professor & Head, Dept. of Dravyaguna, I.P.G.T. & R.A., Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar, Gujarat, India

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*Corresponding author

E-mail: meetjiggu2@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Psoralea corylifolia Linn., known as Bākuṭī in various Ayurvedic pharmacopoeias, such as Nighaṅṭu, Samhitā, Rasa Grantha and Chikitsā Grantha. In these texts, this plant has been attributed with a number of synonyms depicting its morphological identifying characters and pharmacological actions. This paper provides a single hand information regarding Bākuṭī, its properties and actions, from available 30 Nighaṅṭu, 9 Samhitā, 16 Chikitsā Grantha, 30 Rasa Grantha, 9 books related to ethnomedicine and 4 published research articles on ethnomedicinal claims till March 2018. The study reveals that, about 63 synonyms were attributed to Bākuṭī to describe its botanical and pharmacological characters. Its seed has been attributed with 12 chikitsā upayogī (useful in treatment) properties like Medhya (Brain tonic), Rasāyana (Rejuvenation), Rucya etc. Bākuṭī has been indicated in 19 clinical conditions like Śwāsa (Dyspnoea), Kāsa (cough), Kuṣṭha (disease of skin), Kṛmi (Worm infestation) etc. Further almost all part of the plant are commonly used in folklore medicine for skin diseases as well as for snake bite and scorpion sting and aphrodisiac. Findings of this review may enrich to documentary research as well as act as detailed information about Bākuṭī and its usages in Āyurvedic pharmacopoeias.

Keywords: Bākuṭī, Folklore, Lexicon, Nighaṅṭu, *Psoralea corylifolia* Linn., Synonyms.

INTRODUCTION

Bākuṭī is botanically identified as *Psoralea corylifolia* Linn. from the family Fabaceae¹ and its morphology and ethnomedicinal uses have also been reported in various floras and published literatures. It is the most popular drug for Świtra and Kuṣṭha. Various classical texts of Āyurvedā have attributed Bākuṭī with many Paryāya(synonyms), Guṇa karma (properties and actions), Prayoga (indications) etc. but a single-handed detailed and thorough information pertaining to delineations regarding Bākuṭī, its synonyms, properties and its actions on various ailments is unavailable, except one preliminary review on the drug² and its ethnomedicinal claims³ Hence, in this article an attempt has been made to compile a comprehensive information on various aspects of classical drug Bākuṭī from available various Āyurvedā Pharmacopeia.

Out of the Thirty two Nighaṅṭus available in the library of Gujarat Ayurved University and online source of E-Nighaṅṭu, information pertaining to Bākuṭī was found in the following twenty seven Nighaṅṭu namely Sausṛuta Nighaṅṭu⁴; Amarakoṣa⁵; Aṣṭāṅga Nighaṅṭu⁶; Paryāyaratnamālā⁷; Paryāyamuktāvalī⁸; Siddhasāra mantra Nighaṅṭu⁹; Dhanavantari Nighaṅṭu¹⁰; Śabdachandrikā¹¹; Śodhala Nighaṅṭu¹²; DravyaGuṇa Saṅgraha¹³ Nighaṅṭuśeṣa¹⁴; Abhidhāna Ratnamālā¹⁵; Siddhamantra Nighaṅṭu¹⁶; Mādhava Dravyaṅṭu¹⁷; Hṛdaya Dīpaka Nighaṅṭu¹⁸; Madanapāla Nighaṅṭu¹⁹; Kaiyadeva Nighaṅṭu²⁰; Sarasvatī Nighaṅṭu²¹; BhāvaPrakāsha Nighaṅṭu²²; Rāja Nighaṅṭu²³; Śivakoṣa Nighaṅṭu²⁴; Śāligrāma Nighaṅṭu²⁵; Abhidhāna Manjarī²⁶; Priya Nighaṅṭu²⁷; Nighaṅṭu Ādarśa²⁸; Haritakyadī Nighaṅṭu²⁹ and Sankara Nighaṅṭu³⁰ have been scrutinized chapter by chapter by the authors.

Out of the 9 Samhitā, 16 Chikitsā Grantha, 30 Rasa Grantha referred, its Vargikaraṇa(classification), Paryāya(synonyms),

Rasādi pañcaka, (Ayurvedic pharmacodynamics properties) Karma(pharmaodynamic actions), Rogaghnaṭā (indications), have been described in Caraka Samhitā³¹; Suṣruta Samhitā³²; Aṣṭāṅga Saṅgraha³³; Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya³⁴; Yoga Ratnāker³⁵ and Rasa Grantha namely: Ānand Kanda³⁶; Arka Prakāśa³⁷; Rasa Jala Nidhi³⁸; Rasendra Cuḍāmaṇi³⁹; Rasa Ratna Samuccaya⁴⁰; Rasārṇava⁴¹; Rasa Taraṅgiṇī⁴²; Rasa Prakāśa Sudhākara⁴³ and Camatkār Cintamaṇi⁴⁴.

The delineations pertaining to Bākuṭī, its synonyms, properties, actions, and indications on various diseased conditions have been compiled vividly and obtained informations are being presented in a precise tabular format in systematic manner. Standard dictionaries were referred for the interpretation of classical Ayurvedic terminologies for their probable English equivalent terms.^{45,46} The probable English equivalent of technical terminologies were noted referring AFI (Ayurvedic Formulary of India)⁴⁷.

Information of all the reported ethnobotanical uses of the *Psoralea corylifolia* Linn. from 9 books on ethnobotany and 4 ethnomedicinal research articles have been compiled during October 2017 to March 2018. The obtained data are arranged with regards to various local names of Bākuṭī as known by different tribes across India, name of the tribe and their area of presence, part used, therapeutic indications External (E) and mode of administrations as Internal (I) of the drug are also noted with individual references.

Bākuṭī in classical texts

History

Bākuṭī in Vedā: Up to 7th cent. A.D.

There is no reference of Bākuṭī in Veda.

Purāṇa

Bākucī has been used in the treatment of skin diseases since ancient times. In Agni Purāṇa⁴⁸ synonyms of Bākucī such as Avalgujā, Somarājī, Suvallī, Somavallikā, Kalmeṣī, Kṛṣṇaphalā, Pūtiphalī have been mentioned. In Garūṇa Purāṇa⁴⁹ it has been prescribed to take hot decoction of Bākucī with milk to cure Kuṣṭha and the decoction of Āmalakī, Khadira and Bākucī to cure even severe types of Świtra.

Samhitā Grantha: 8th to 15th cent. A.D.

Bākucī has been widely described in Samhitā grantha for management of various skin diseases and systemic diseases both internally and externally. Its Śaka has been described along with

the properties in Caraka Samhitā under Tikta Skandha (Bitter soup of drugs)⁶⁵ in Suśruta Samhita under Katuka Varga⁶⁴ in Aṣṭāṅga Saṅgraha³³ and Aṣṭāṅga Hridaya³⁴ under Śaka Varga.

Rasa Grantha

Bākucī is one of the common ingredient of various Rasa formulations. Its oil is considered useful in skin diseases. Hence it has been categorised under the Rasa Grantha. In Arka Prakāśa³⁷ under Twacya gaṇa, in Rasa Jala Nidhi³⁸ under Rasa Tailani, i.e drugs from whose seeds oil can be extracted. In Rasendra Cuḍāmaṇi³⁹ under Vyāghrikadi gaṇa; In Rasa Ratna Samuccaya⁴⁰ under Taila Āhṛaṇa upyogī dravya; containing 9 drugs beneficial to skin.

Table 1: Classification of Bākucī in Nighaṇṭu

S.No	Varga(classification/group/section)	Reference
Based on first drug		
1.	Guducyādi varga (Guduchi and other drugs)	10,12
2.	Abhayādi varga (Abhayā and other drugs)	19
3.	Haritakyādi varga (Haritaki and other drugs)	22
4.	Śatāhvādi varga (Śatāhvā and other drugs)	23
5.	Śatpuṣpādi varga (Śatpuṣpā and other drugs)	27
6.	Palāśādi varga (Palaśa and other drugs)	28
7.	Candanādi varga (Candana and other drugs)	21
Based on Doṣa Karma		
8.	Kapha Vātaghna-pittala dravya	16
Based on Rasa(taste)		
9.	Tikta dravya skandha	15
Based on Guṇa(characters)		
10.	Tripāda varga	18
11.	Hīna gandha Varga	
Based on karma(action)		
12.	Prakīrṇa gaṇa	5
13.	Viprakīrṇa gaṇa	7
Based on habit		
14.	Gulma kāṇḍa	14
15.	Vṛkshādi varga	11
Based on number		
16.	Aṣṭa varga	25
Based on use		
17.	Oushadhi varga	20
18.	Vanoushadhi	6
19.	Vividhoushadhi	17
Others:		
20.	Śaka varga	13

Nighaṇṭu

In Nighaṇṭu, Plants have been classified into various groups/sections based on their morphological, pharmacological, and therapeutic properties. The details of classifications have been enumerated in Table 1.

Paryāya(Synonyms)

In Āyurvedā, traditionally, to know a plant, various names known as Paryāya (synonyms) have been attributed. Available 63 synonyms of Bākucī when analysed critically show that it is a

plant which appears very pleasant and beautiful (Somarājī, Somarājīkā, Prabhā, Suprabhā) bears beautiful leaves (Suparṇīkā) and beautiful flowers (Suvallī, Suvallīkā), has blackish brown fruits (Kṛṣṇaphalā, Kṛṣṇaphalī) which appear somewhat ugly (Avalgujā) and have foul smell (Pūtiphalā, Pūtiphalī, Kṛṣṇapūtiphalā, Pūtipatraphalā, Pūtiparṇī, Pratigandhā, Durgandhā). The plant survives for long periods (kāḷmeṣi) and is very effective in treating Kuṣṭha (Kuṣṭhaghñī, Kuṣṭhanāntrī, Kuṣṭhanāshīnī, Bākucī). It is also effective in treating Świtra (Świtragnī). The details of synonyms have been enumerated in Table 2.

Table 2: Synonyms attributed to Bākucī in various classical texts of Āyurvedā

Sr.No	Name	Reference
Pharmacognostical characters		
Seeds		
1.	Aindavī	36, 23
2.	Aindrī	23
3.	Candrabhidā	23
4.	Candralkhā	7,8,10, 18,19,23
5.	Candralkhikā	12
6.	Candrarājī	4
7.	Candrarekhā	6,15,20
8.	Candraśaklā	20
9.	Candrikā	19,20
10.	Indulekhā	10,14
11.	Indurājī	18,20,26
12.	Induśakalā	18
13.	Khandrājī	20
14.	Rājī	23
15.	Śaśānkarekhā	26
16.	Śashilekhā	10,22
17.	Śashirekhā	36
18.	Udunāth	44
Fruits		
19.	Avalgujā	4 to 15;17 to 23
20.	Kṛṣṇā	8
21.	Kṛṣṇaphalā	5,10,19 to 22,25,26
22.	Kṛṣṇaphalī	14
23.	Pūriphalā	26
Leaves		
24.	Suparṇikā	22
Flowers		
25.	Prabhā	23
26.	Somalatā	26
27.	Somarājī	4,5,7 to 12;14; 18 to23,25,27
28.	Somarājikā	15
29.	Somavallī	10,12,14,19,20,22,23,25
30.	Somavallikā	5,11,14,15,21
31.	Suprabhā	23
32.	Suvalī	5,10,11,21
33.	Suvallikā	20,23
Organoleptic characters		
34.	Durgandhā	10,14
35.	Kṛṣṇapūtiphalā	7,10
36.	Pūtigandhā	36
37.	Pūtikarnī	10
38.	Pūtikṛṣṇaphalā	15
39.	Pūtiparnī	14
40.	Pūtipatraphalā	12
41.	Pūtiphalā	4,8,10,19,20
42.	Pūtiphalī	5,11,14,21,22,24,25
43.	Pratigandhā	23
Pharmacological characters		
44.	Kuṣṭhaghnī	12,19,22
45.	Kuṣṭhahā	36
46.	Kuṣṭhahantrī	23
47.	Kuṣṭhanāshinī	7,8,10,14,25
48.	Świtraghnī	27
Others		
49.	Amritā	20
50.	Bākucīkā	4,26
51.	Kālmāṣī	23
52.	Kālmeṣī	5,10,11,14,20,21,22,24,36
53.	Kālmeṣīkā	19,25
54.	Kāmbojī	12,23,36
55.	Malayū	6,15,20
56.	Sitā	7,8,23
57.	Sitavarī	23
58.	Soma	19
59.	Somā	22
60.	Somakhandā	20
61.	Vāguji	7,11

62.	Varā	19,20
63.	Vejan	11,25

Table 3: Important synonyms with their interpretation

Synonym of Bākucī	Nirukti and Interpretation ^{51,52}
Pharmacognostical characters	
Suparnikā	Good looking leaves
Kṛṣṇaphalā, Kṛṣṇaphalī	The plant has blackish brown fruits
Chandralekhā, Chandralekhikā Chandrarājī, Chandrarekhā, Śaṣīlekhā, Śaṣānkarekhā, Somarājī, somarājikā, Indulekhā, Indurājī,.	Seeds have white streak inside/appears very pleasant and beautiful
Avalguja, Krishnaphala	Fruits appear ugly
Durgandhā, Pūtiphalā, Pūtiphalī, Pūtikṛṣṇaphalā, Pratigandhā	The fruits are foul smelling
Pharmacological characters	
Kuṣṭhaghñī, Kuṣṭhanantrī, Kuṣṭhanāshinī.	Indicated in Kuṣṭha and other skin diseases.

Table 4: Ethnomedicinal uses of Bākucī in different tribes and their reporting area

Sn	Area/tribe	Use
SEEDS		
1.	Ceylon	In snake bite, the seeds are ground with water and liquid poured into each nostril in stupor and coma. Powder administered internally ⁵³
2.	China and malaya	Tonic and aphrodisiac, administered in cutaneous diseases ⁵³
3.	Indo china	Stomach ache, spermatorhea, skin disease ⁵³
4.	North of Annam	Macerated in alcohol and liquor is given in rheumatism and women disease ⁵³
5.	America	Stimulating nervines ⁵³
6.	Kolkata	Used in white skin, grey hair, rough scaly discoloured skin, nails, hair to normal colour in 3 months ⁵⁷
7.	Bundelkhand	Eaten by cattle ⁶²

Rasādīpañchaka of Bākucī (Ayurvedic Pharmacodynamic properties)

A drug performs certain local and general actions by its Rasa and Guṇa, and certain specific therapeutic actions by its Vipāka and Vīrya. It is emphasized in most Nighaṇṭu that Bākucī Śaka is predominantly tikta rasa, with rukṣa, laghu Guṇa, kaṭu vipāka and Śīta vīrya and has kapha alleviating properties^{10,13,19,20,22,25,31,32,33,34,36}. The fruit is having Uṣṇa Vīrya and pitta aggravating properties^{19,22,23}. Almost all authors are of the opinion that Bākucī is having Tikta rasa except very few according to whom along with tikta rasa it is Madhura rasa^{20,22}. Only Caraka Samhitā indicates its Madhura Vipāka instead of Katu³¹ and Kapha-vāta alleviating properties⁶³.

Karma (Actions or indications)

Bākucī has been attributed various properties by various authors. Medhya, Rasāyana, Rucya are the most important karma attributed to Bākucī. Also, it has been indicated in the management of different disease conditions out of which Kuṣṭha and Kṛmī, are indicated in maximum number of Nighaṇṭu. The most important karma attributed to Bākucī are Rasāyana (Rejuvenation)^{10,19,20,22,33} Rucya^{10,19,20,22,25} Dīpana (Digestive)^{20,25,33,34} Grāhī^{10,25,33,34} Bhedana (useful for breaking)^{31,33,34} Medhya (promoting intellect)^{10,20,25} Hṛdya (wholesome to the heart)^{19,20,22} Keśya (beneficial to hair)^{20,22} Sara^{19,20,22} Twacya (beneficial to skin).^{20,22} Viṣṭambhī (obstructed Vāta Doṣa)^{19,20} Balya (promoting strength)²⁵. The diseases where Bākucī has been indicated are Kuṣṭha (Leprosy)^{10,19,20,22,23,25,33} Kṛmī (Worm infestation)^{10,19,20,22,23,25} Śwāsa (Dyspnoea)^{19,20,22,25} Jwara (Fever)^{19,20,22,25} Raktapitta (Bleeding disorder)^{10,19,22,25} Prameha (Urinary disorder)^{20,22,25} Kāsa (cough)^{20,22,25} Arśa (Piles)^{31,35} Pāṇḍu (Anaemia)^{20,22} Atisāra (Diarrhoea)^{31,34} Kandu/Kharju (itching)^{23,25} Śoṭha (Inflammation)^{20,22} TwakaDoṣa (Skin disorder)^{23,25} Viṣa (Poison)^{23,25} Śweta kuṣṭha (leukoderma)¹⁹ Vraṇa (Ulcer)^{10,25} Āma Doṣa²⁰ Aruci²⁰ Grahāṇī³⁵.

Types

Śāligrāma Nighaṇṭu²⁵ has described Świtrārī as one of the types of Bākucī, indicated in Kuṣṭha, Tridoṣaj Rakta vikāra, Vātarakta, Śidhma and Świtra.

Bākucī pratinidhi dravya

Prapunnāda botanically identified as *Cassia tora* Linn. of the Family Caesalpinaceae has been indicated as the substitute of Bākucī³⁵.

Bākucī and its importance in Rasa Grantha

Description of use of Bākucī seeds can be traced in various Rasa Grantha, for various purpose. It has been used for Abhṛaka Māraṇa³⁸, Pārada Bandhana as Divyarūpa Dhāraṇa yoga⁴¹, Khotnirmāna⁴¹ Khot nirmān tatha shabdvedi mahārasa⁴¹, Parad nirjīvikaraṇa (Vyāghrikādi gaṇa)³⁹, for Pārada Māraṇa; as Mahaushadhya sūtbandh maraṇadhikāra⁴², Pāradasya mārak gaṇa⁴³, Rasa ko māraṇa karne wāli auśadhi bīja⁴¹, Other uses are as Nigalottam Dravya⁴¹ and Nigalottam Pārada Yoga.⁴¹

Oil extraction

Bākucī seeds are known for their aromatic oil bearing properties. Different methods of oil extraction have been described such as Taila Pātana by Kanduka Yantra Vidhi and Taila āharaṇa by Rakta Apāmārga mūla⁴⁰

Bākucī Śodhana

An over dose of the seed powder may cause Hṛllāsa (Nausea), Chardi (Vomiting), Avasāda (depression), Śīrah śūla (Head ache), and virechana (loose motions)^{52,30} hence śodhana of Bākucī seeds is recommended by Nimajan (dipping) in Gomutra or Ārdraka swarasa for seven days.⁵²

Ethno- medicinal claims

Different parts of plant *Psoralea corylifolia* Linn. has been reported for various pharmacological actions during ethnomedicinal and ethnobotanical survey studies.

Its root are used for dental carries^{3,53,59} leaves for diarrhoea^{3,53,59} fruits for more than 8 clinical conditions for internal administration like anaemia⁵³ asthma⁵³ bronchitis⁵³ Dysuria⁵³, improving hair and complexion⁵³ inflammation⁵³ piles⁵³ and vomiting⁵³.

Bākūcī seeds serve a variety of purpose. They are most commonly used as aphrodisiac^{3,53,55,57,59,62} diaphoretic^{55,56,60,62} diuretic^{3,59,60,62} laxative^{3,57,60,62}. Other uses are anthelmintic^{3,57,60} stimulant^{53,57,62} biliousness^{53,57} inflammatory diseases of skin and hair^{3,55} snake bite and scorpion sting^{3,57}, blood diseases⁵³ carminative⁵⁴ deobstruent⁵⁵ glandular swelling⁵⁴ hair tonic⁵⁹ heart trouble⁵³ impotency⁶⁰ purgative⁵³ stomachic⁵³ appetiser⁵³ asthma⁵³

The seed powder is used externally in scabies^{3,53,59,61} ulcers^{53,54,59,61}. Skin diseases^{53,59,61} vitiligo^{3,59} leukoderma^{53,59} eczema³ leprosy⁵⁴⁻⁶² and Psoriasis³.

Bākūcī seed oil is reported to cure 10 disease conditions among which internally used in in worm infestation^{55,57,60,62} anorexia⁶² constipation⁶² elephantiasis⁵³ leprosy⁵⁴⁻⁶² odema⁶² polyuria⁶² and Rheumatism⁶².

Externally, the seed oil is used in management of chronic skin diseases³ leprosy⁵⁴⁻⁶² and used to make perfume oil^{3,57} The plant is also reported to cure chronic diarrhoea and cold, reproductive diseases and cough and urinary frequency in combination with other drugs.³ Externally it is also used to treat alopecia areata³.

DISCUSSION

Though Vṛṣya is not an action indicated in classical texts, it is maximum reported in ethnomedicinal claims. The śāka has been prescribed in diarrhoea and piles in Samhitā and is also used likewise in folklore practise. The fruits are also described as Keśya and Twacya in the classics and used in ethnomedicinal practise to improve skin and hair. The seeds are indicated in Kṛmī, Śwāsa, and Kuṣṭha in the Nighaṇṭu and also used as Anthelmintic, Dyspnoea and Leprosy commonly.

CONCLUSION

Bākūcī is one of the important drug in the Āyurvedic pharmacopoeia being in practise since ancient times. Its pharmacological properties and actions have been well documented in all Samhitā, Cikitsā grantha, maximum Rasa Grantha and Nighaṇṭu. Synonyms of Bākūcī described in various Nighaṇṭu botanically correlate with plant *Psoralea corylifolia* Linn. of the family Fabaceae. It possess tikta rasa, laghu, Rukśa Guṇa. The Śaka is attributed with Śita vīrya while the fruit is uṣṇa vīrya. It has kapha hara properties and is used internally in about 19 disease conditions major ones being Kuṣṭha, Świtra and Kṛmī. It is an excellent remedy for skin diseases. It is also a wonderful Dipana, Medhya and Rasāyana drug.

The seeds are used for various uses in Rasa Granthas like Abhakra Māraṇa, Pārada bandhana and Pārada Māraṇa.

In folklore practise, the plant is utilised both internally and externally. The roots are used in dental carries and leaves in diarrhoea. Fruit is used in more than 8 disease conditions. The seeds are used internally in 24 disease condition, the most

common being laxative, aphrodisiac and diuretic and externally in 8 conditions, the most common being leprosy and leucoderma. Seed oil is used in leprosy both internally and externally.

Hence, this review may steer as a direction to further scientific research to explore all the pharmacological properties of Bākūcī delineated in various Āyurvedā Pharmacopeia and may be referred as a document based research for further researches.

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