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A REVIEW ON DANTI (*BALIOSPERMUM MONTANUM* WILLD. MUELL. ARG) IN NIGHANTU KALA

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ABSTRACT

Danti (*Baliospermum montanum* (Willd.) Muell. Arg.) is a classical Tikshna Virechana Dravya widely described in the Nighantu literature of Ayurveda. The present review systematically reviews and analyzes the references of Danti exclusively from major Nighantus ranging from the 5th to the 20th century, focusing on its synonyms, varga classification, Rasadipanchaka, dosha-karma, and therapeutic indications. A comparative literary methodology was adopted, wherein descriptions from principal lexicons such as Dhanvantari Nighantu, Shodhala Nighantu, Raj Nighantu, Kaiyadeva Nighantu, and Bhavprakash Nighantu were critically examined and tabulated to identify similarities and variations. The analysis demonstrates remarkable consistency in describing Danti as Katu rasa, Ushna virya, Tikshna and Sara guna, and Katu vipaka, with predominant action in Kapha-Vata shamana and strong shodhana and virechana karma. Variations observed in dosha-karma and varga placement reflect evolving classificatory approaches rather than conceptual inconsistency. The rich synonym profile encodes morphological, pharmacodynamic, and therapeutic attributes, highlighting the depth of classical pharmacognostic insight. Notably, its identification as an Abhava Pratinidhi of Chitraka in Bhavprakash underscoring recognized pharmacological similarity. Overall, the Nighantu evidence establishes Danti as a potent eliminative drug with subtle pharmacodynamic identity and enduring relevance in Ayurvedic therapeutics.

Keywords: Danti, *Baliospermum montanum* (Willd.) Muell. Arg, Nighantu, Synonyms, Pharmacodynamics, Review article

INTRODUCTION

Dravyaguna Vigyana is fundamentally based on the knowledge of nama (synonyms), rupa (morphology), guna (properties), karma (actions), and prayoga (therapeutic utility) of medicinal plants¹. Among the classical sources of Ayurvedic materia medica, Nighantus occupies a unique and authoritative position. They systematically compile synonyms, pharmacodynamic properties, classification into classes, and therapeutic indications of drugs described in the Samhitas and later traditions.

Danti is commonly identified with *Baliospermum montanum* (Willd.) Muell. Arg² is a well-known Tikshna Virechana Dravya³, described extensively in classical Ayurvedic literature. While Samhitas such as Charak and Sushruta describe its therapeutic indications, it is in the Nighantu period (5th-16th Century AD) that Danti receives elaborate attention in terms of synonyms, varga classification, Rasadipanchaka, and specific disease indications. Various Nighantukaras, such as Dhanvantari, Shodhala, Kaideva, and Bhavprakash, have described Danti with slight variations in Guna, Karma, and Doshaganta, indicating evolving interpretations across the centuries.

One of the significant contributions of the Nighantu literature is the detailed explanation of synonyms, which provide insights into morphology (Udumbarparni), pharmacological action (Virechani, Vishodhani), potency (Shighra), and therapeutic application (Mukulaka)⁴. Furthermore, certain Nighantus mention Danti as an Abhava Pratinidhi Dravya of Chitraka, highlighting its pharmacodynamic similarity and clinical importance⁵.

Despite its repeated mention across major Nighantu, a consolidated analytical review focusing exclusively on Nighantu kala descriptions of Danti is lacking. Most studies emphasize pharmacological or clinical aspects, while the lexicographical and comparative interpretation of Nighantu references remains underexplored. Standard Dravyaguna textbooks were referred to for cross-verification of botanical identity (*Baliospermum montanum* Willd. Muell. Arg)⁶.

NIGHANTU KALA (1100 B.C. TO 1600 B.C.)

Soushruta Nighantu (5th Century AD)

The Nighantukara Amarsinha described Danti in Arkadigana as a Nagadanti and also in Shyamadigana. Synonyms like- Chitra, Nikumbha, Udumbarapatrika, Upachitra, Erandaphala, and Dhuneshta are also given for it⁷.

Ashtanga Nighantu (7th Century AD)

In this lexicon, Danti is mentioned in Arkadigana, Shyamadigana, and in Viprakirna prakarana. Many synonyms- Nikumbha, Chitra, Mukulaka, and Hastidanti, etc., are in it⁸. He mentioned using it in Gulma, Aruchi, and Mutrakrichchha⁹. In Viprakirnagana, it is said to be used in Garavisha and Kritrima Visha¹⁰.

Madanadi Nighantu (10th Century AD)

Danti is in Prathamgana in this lexicon. Some synonyms are also in it, along with properties like Virechana, Deepana, etc., and said uses in Anaha, Udarashoola, and Pliharoga¹¹. Also, it is in the Arkadi Gana and is said to be used in Kaphahara, Krimi, Kushtha, etc. Sarvapushpi, Shuklapushpi- synonyms are described in it, and uses in Kushtha, Krimi, Shoola¹².

Dhanavantari Nighantu (11th century AD)

In Dhanavantari Nighantu, it is mentioned in Nikumbhadivarga, Guduchyadivarga, and Suvarnadi Varga. Danti, Shighra, Nikumbha, Upachitra, Mukulaka, Udumbaraparni, Vishalya, Ghunapriya, etc., synonyms are mentioned¹³, and the Rasadipanchaka – katu rasa, ushna virya, Tikshna guna, and kapha-vatahara, Deepana, shodhana, etc., karma is mentioned in it¹⁴. It is used in Arsha, Ashmari, Vrana, and Shoola¹⁵.

Shodhala Nighantu (13th century AD)

In this Nighantu, Danti is in Guduchyadi gana, in both the bhaga, like Pratham bhaga- namasangraha and Dwitiya bhaga – gunasangraha of the Nighantu¹⁶. It is used as a pitta-virechaka Dravya. Nighantukara Shodhala mentioned that danti and chitraka have rasadi samyata, but due to its Prabhava, it is taken in virechana karma¹⁷. Danti is used in pakva-shopha to decrease. Danti is also used in kandu, pama, kushtha, and krimiroga¹⁸.

Raj Nighantu (14th Century AD)

In Raj Nighantu, the author described Danti in Parpatadi varga, Saptartha varga, and Dravyarthaka varga¹⁹. He used the synonym Nagadanti for it and wrote that it is katu, tikta, ruksha, ushna, vata-kapha hara, and pachani²⁰. Danti is useful in Gulma, Shoola, Udararoga, Twakaroga, Arsha, Vrana, Ashmari, and Kantharoga²¹. He gave many synonyms like Shighra, Shyenghanta, Bhadra, Nishalya, Madhupushpa, Erandapatrika, Udumbaradala, Kumbhi, Vishodhini, Nikumbha, etc²². It is also mentioned in Anekanamarthaganasangraha²³.

Madanpala Nighantu (14th Century AD)

In this Nighantu, it is in the Abhayadivarga²⁴. Many synonyms are given here. It is said that both the Danti are katu in rasa and vipaka, Tikshna, sara, Deepana, pitta-rakta-kapha doshahara, and

useful in Krimi, shotha, udararoga²⁵. It is used with Jimutaka, Shigru, Nimba, Karanja, etc., to prepare Katutaila, which is indicated in Kushtha, meha, krimi, murchha, etc., diseases²⁶.

Kaiyadeva Nighantu (15th Century AD)

The Nighantukara described it in Aushadha varga²⁷. Many synonyms are said in this lexicon, like Nagadanti, Madhupushpa, Mukulaka, etc²⁸. It is tikta, Tikshna, ushna, sara, vikashi, Deepana-pachana, kapha-pitta hara, and rochaka²⁹. It is useful in Visharoga, Yonidosha, Shoola, Udararoga, Anaha, Shotha, Arsha, Ashmari, Kandu, Kushtha, Krimi, and Vrana roga³⁰. Danti also gives a good result in Visha of Sarpa and Luta³¹. Danti kalpanas are said here also.

Bhavaprakasha Nighantu (16th Century AD)

The Nighantukara quated first time that the Dravya Danti is taken in the abhava (Pratinidhi Dravya-substitute) of Chitraka³². He put it in Mishravarga³³. Also count Danti as a Rasayana Dravya among haritaki, guggulu, and shilajita³⁴. Danti Prabhava is mentioned by comparing the rasadisatmya of Chitraka and Danti³⁵. Laghudanti, Vishalya, Udumbaraparni, Erandaphala, Shighra, Shyenaghanta, Ghunapriya, Mukulaka, etc., synonyms are given for Danti in this lexicon³⁶. It has Katu rasa, Ushna virya, Tikshna, sara guna, Katu vipaka, and pitta-rakta-kapha hara karma³⁷. It is used in many vyadhis like: arsha, ashmari, shola, kandu, shotha, krimi, kushtha, vidaha, and udararoga³⁸.

The various Nighantus describe numerous Sanskrit synonyms of Danti, reflecting its morphological, pharmacological action, and therapeutic attributes. A comparative representation of these synonyms across different Nighantus texts is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sanskrit synonyms of Danti described in different Nighantus

	A. M.	A.R.	Ash. Ni.	Kai. Ni.	Dha. Ni.	Ni. She.	Pa. Ra.	MP Ni.	M. Ni.	Sho. Ni.	Sou. Ni.	Raj Ni.	Bha. Ni.
Danti	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Nikumbh	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Chitra	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
Upchitra	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-
Mukulak	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+
Ghunpriya	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	+
Shighra	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	+
Vishalya	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+
Tikshnarechani	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Erandaphala	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-
Sanskrani	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kakodumbaraphala	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mukunda	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shikhari	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chitrakpatri	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shambar	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hastidanti	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Udumbarchchhada	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Aakhuphala	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chitrakula	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Drakshayani	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Amari	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shalyo	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Upashalya	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ramduti	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ghunavallabha	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Udumbaraparni	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	+
Nagdanti	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Pratyekshreni	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Vanhisama	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Ghuneshta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Shyenaghanta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+

Nagsphota	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Udumbaraphala	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Vishodhani	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Dantini	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Bhadra	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Ruksha	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Rochani	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Taruni	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Anukula	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Nishalya	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Madhupushpa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Erandapatrika	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Anurevati	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Laghudanti	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Varahngi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The classical synonyms of Danti also convey important pharmacognostic and therapeutic information³⁹. The interpretations of major Sanskrit synonyms are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Interpretation of Sanskrit synonyms of Danti

Synonyms	Interpretation
Danti	The roots are like those of elephant's tusks in their color and shape, or the plant whose leaves have a sinuate toothed margin, or it will cure the disease like Arsha and Kushtha.
Erandaphala	Its seeds are similar to the Eranda seeds, or they act as a purgative just like Eranda.
Nikumbha	Its fruits are similar to a pot, or it clears the bowel.
Udumbaraparni Udumbaradala	Its leaves resemble the shape of Udumbara.
Madhupushpa	Whose flowers contain a nectar gland.
Ghunapriya	Its roots are favorites of insects.
Upachitra	Fruits with mottled seeds.
Mukulaka	It makes the skin beautiful by destroying all skin diseases effectively, like Kushtha, Kandu, etc.
Vishalya	It clears out the bowel in Vaddhagudodara.
Shighra	Very strong purgative or gives quick action.
Vishodhini	Roots are used as a purgative.
Virechani	Roots are useful as a drastic purgative.

Different Nighantukas classified Danti under various Vargas based on pharmacological properties, morphology, and therapeutic utility⁴⁰. The chronological classification of Danti in different Nighantus is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Classification of Danti in different Vargas across Nighantu literature

Nighantus	Time Period	Varga
Sushruta Nighantu	5 th Century	Shyamadigana
Ashtanga Nighantu	7 th century	Shyamadigana
Amarakosha	7 th Century	Vanaushadhi Varga
Paryayratnamala	9 th Century	Amalakyadi Varga
Madanadi Nighantu	10 th Century	Prathama gana, Dwitiya gana
Dhanawantari Nighantu	11 th Century	Nikumbhadi Varga, Guduchudi Varga, Suwarnadi Varga
Shabda Chandrika	11 th Century	Vrikshadi Varga
Nighantu Shesha	12 th Century	Gulmakanda
Abhidhana Ratnamala	13 th Century	Katuskandha
Shodhala Nighantu	13 th Century	Nikumbhadi Varga, Guduchyadi Varga, Gunasangraha (Dwitiya bhaga)
Siddhamantra	13 th Century	Kapha-Vataghna Varga
Hridayadipika Nighantu	13 th Century	Kapha-Pittaghna Varga
Madhav Dravyaguna	13 th Century	Vividha Oshadhi Varga, Tila Varga
Raj Nighantu	14 th Century	Pippalyadi Varga, Simhadi Saptartha Varga, Anekarthanaam sangraha (Dvyarthaka varga)
Madanpala Nighantu	14 th Century	Abhayadi Varga, Phaladi Varga, Paniyadi Varga
Kaiyadeva Nighantu	15 th Century	Nikumbhadi Varga, Aushadhi Varga
Bhavprakash Nighantu	16 th century	Guduchyadi Varga, Mishra Prakarana
Saraswati Nighantu	16 th Century	Ulpa Varga
Shivakosha	17 th Century	Tatrih-Tryaksharamtantrah
Rajvallabha Nighantu	18 th Century	Aushadhi Varga
Shaligrama Nighantu	19 th Century	Guduchyadi Varga
Nighantu Adarsh	19 th Century	Nikumbhadi Varga, Amalakyadi Varga
Priya Nighantu	20 th Century	Shatpushpadi Varga
Abhidhanamanjiri	20 th Century	Nikumbhadi Varga, Shyamadi gana

Although most Nighantus describe similar pharmacodynamic properties of Danti, slight variations are observed in Rasadipanchaka among different texts⁴¹. These comparative descriptions are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Rasadipanchaka (pharmacodynamic properties) of Danti described in various Nighantus

Name of Text	Rasa	Guna	Virya	Vipaka	Dosha-Karma
Bh. Ni.	Katu	Tikshna, Vikasi	Ushna	Katu	Pitta-Kapha-Rakta hara
Dh. Ni.	Katu	Tikshna	Ushna	Katu	Kapha-Vata hara
R. Ni.	Katu	-	Ushna	Katu	Kapha-Vata hara
Sho. Ni.	Katu	Tikshna, Sara	Ushna	Katu	Kapha-Vata hara
K. Ni.	Katu	Tikshna	Ushna	Katu	Pitta-Kapha hara
S. Ni.	Katu	Tikshna	Ushna	Katu	Kapha-Pitta hara Kapha-Vata hara
M. Ni.	Katu	Tikshna	Ushna	Katu	Pitta-Kapha-Rakta hara
Ni. A.	Katu	Tikshna	Ushna	Katu	Kapha-Vata hara
P. Ni.	Katu	Tikshna	Ushna	Katu	Pitta-Kapha hara
Pr. Rt.	Katu	Tikshna, Guru	Ushna	Katu	Kapha-Vata hara

DISCUSSION

The review of Nighantu literature reveals that Danti has maintained a remarkably consistent pharmacodynamic identity across centuries. Almost all major Nighantus describe Danti as predominantly Katu rasa and Ushna Virya, indicating a stable classical consensus regarding its action on Agni and Dosha. The predominance of Katu rasa supports its Deepana, Pachana, and Shodhana properties⁴², while Ushna Virya facilitates stimulation of metabolic activity and elimination through the lower channels⁴³. This uniformity across lexicons suggests that the experiential knowledge of Danti's purgative potency was well established in classical practice.

A striking feature observed in the comparative analysis is the repeated emphasis on Tikshna guna. Nearly every Nighantukara highlights its sharp, penetrating nature, which correlates with its classification under Bhedaniya and Adhobhaghara groups in the Samhita tradition⁴⁴. The persistence of Tikshna guna across centuries reflects strong clinical recognition of Danti as a drastic purgative drug⁴⁵. Synonyms such as Virechani, Vishodhini, and Shighra further reinforce its rapid and potent eliminative action, demonstrating that nomenclature itself functioned as a pharmacological descriptor.

Although the majority of Nighantus describe Danti as Kapha-Vatahara, minor variations are observed in certain texts where it is mentioned as Pitta-Kapha hara or even Pitta-Rakta hara. These variations may not represent a contradiction but rather reflect dose-dependent or context-specific therapeutic applications. Given its Ushna and Tikshna attributes, Danti possesses the potential to influence Pitta, especially when administered in higher doses or in specific pathological states. Thus, the variations observed across texts indicate nuanced clinical interpretation rather than inconsistency.

The classification of Danti into different Vargas, across Nighantus-such as Shyamadi, Nikumbhadi, Guduchyadi, and Mishra Prakarana, demonstrates the evolving lexicological systems of the Nighantu period. These variations likely arose from differing criteria of grouping, including similarity in action, morphology, or therapeutic utility. However, despite changes in varga placement, its fundamental identity as a strong Shodhana and Virechana Dravya remains unaffected, underscoring conceptual continuity within classical literature.

The extensive range of Sanskrit synonyms attributed to Danti reflects a multidimensional understanding of the drug. Morphology-based names such as Udumbarparni and Erandaphala aid in identification, while action-oriented names like Virechani and Vishodhini emphasizes its purgative capacity. Potency-indicating terms such as Shighra highlight its rapid action, and therapeutic descriptions such as Mukulaka indicate its efficacy in skin disorders. This synonymic diversity suggests that

Nighantukaras encoded pharmacological, morphological, and clinical information within the nomenclature itself.

A significant conceptual development is observed in Bhavprakash Nighantu, where Danti is described as an Abhava Pratinidhi Dravya of Chikitsa. This indicates recognition of pharmacodynamic similarity, particularly in Deepana and Shodhana Karma. However, the consistent emphasis on its Tikshna virechana action suggests that Danti may exhibit a more pronounced eliminative effect compared to Chitraka. Additionally, its inclusion among Rasayana drugs in Bhavprakash introduces a broader therapeutic dimension, possibly implying systemic detoxification and metabolic correction beyond simple purgation.

Overall, the Nighantu evidence presents Danti as a well-defined, potent, Ushna-Tikshna predominant drug with stable Rasadipanchaka and strong eliminative action. The minor variations observed across texts enrich rather than weaken their classical identity, reflecting dynamic interpretative practices within Ayurvedic lexicography.

CONCLUSION

The Nighantu literature establishes Danti as a potent Tikshna Virechana Dravya characterized predominantly by Katu rasa, Ushna virya, Tikshna and Sara guna, and Katu Vipaka, with primary action in alleviating Kapha and Vata dosha. Despite minor variations in dosha-karma and varga classification across different lexicons, its fundamental pharmacodynamic identity remains stable throughout the Nighantu period. The extensive range of Sanskrit synonyms reflects a multidimensional understanding encompassing morphology, potency, and therapeutic application, indicating the depth of classical pharmacognostic insight. The recognition of Danti as an Abhava Pratinidhi of Chitraka further highlights its clinical significance in Deepana and Shodhana therapies. Overall, the Nighantu-based evidence confirms Danti as a well-defined, powerful eliminative drug with enduring relevance in Ayurvedic therapeutics.

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