



# International Journal of Sanskrit Research

अनन्ता

ISSN: 2394-7519

IJSR 2024; 10(1): 207-209

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Received: 13-11-2023

Accepted: 16-12-2023

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## Ṛgvaidika knowledge on herbs-special reference with Oṣadhi Sūkta

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22271/23947519.2024.v10.i1d.2315>

### Abstract

This paper indented to recollecting the excellence of Vedas and the ability of Vedic age. They show in each and every sections related to living beings and nonliving things. The medical field was developed very much in that age. In this paper discuss about the knowledge of herbs or Oṣadhis in Ṛgveda. There were vast knowledge about herbs and medical system. How they grown, how to use, how this combine etc. are discussed there. It was in hymns and prayers of well-being.

**Keyword:** Ṛgvaidika knowledge, herbs-special reference, Oṣadhi Sūkta

### Introduction

The plants and trees provided food and shelter in the initial stages of a human. With his growing his knowledge about newer usages and benefits of plants and trees also increased. In Vaidika literatures gave scientific knowledge and vast references to diverse usages of plants and trees. Plants, their various parts and their products were used in a number of ways for social and religious activities and medical sector<sup>1</sup>. Agriculture was the main source of livelihood in ancient India. Their life was inter-connected with nature. The Indus valley civilization<sup>2</sup> was begins the high grade of the history of science and technology in India. This period also called the pre - Vedic period<sup>3</sup>. The developments in science and technology can see in the Vedic texts. An analysis of the Vedas reveals the gradual growing of knowledge. The Ṛgveda gave first reference to it.

The Vedas show that nature is treated as gods with fire, water, river, rain, sun, moon, morning, night etc... The people of that ages believed that may protect them as a deity. So the people intended to worship and initiative to preserve environment. They got different kind of achievements from it like food, shelter, medicine etc... The Vedas included not only prayers but also their great knowledge about particular things or deities. Altogether, Vedas became a great treasure trove of knowledge. Those have a reference in many fields of knowledge in modern times.

### Plants in Ṛgveda

The Ṛgveda recognized three groups of plants, viz Trees (Vṛkṣa), Herbs (Oṣadhi), and Creepers (Vīrudh). These are further divided into flowering, non-flowering, fruit bearing, and fruitless plants. Atharvaveda also contains more descriptions of many medicinal plants. Casual references to different parts of the plant are found scattered throughout the Ṛgveda and almost complete details of plants are found in the Atharvaveda. Atharvaveda is the earliest among Vedas which constructed more scientifically. There were more medical or scientifically mentions and details compared to other Vedas. But Ṛgveda was the radical source of many subjects in Vedas. The earliest collection of knowledge is Ṛgveda.

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<sup>1</sup> Vṛkṣāyurveda In Ancient India, Lallagi Gopal, Sandeep Prakasan, New Delhi, 2000

<sup>2</sup> Approximately 2500-1700 BCE

<sup>3</sup> Approximately 3000- 1700 BCE

## The Ayurveda and the Oṣadhi Sūkta

Ayurveda, the subpart of Atharvaveda deals with medical knowledge and health care. But many plants or herbs which used to healing and health care were mentioned in Ṛgveda. Among the ten Maṇḍala of Ṛgveda, the tenth Maṇḍala contains several Sūktas which are widely used or widely referred. Tenth Maṇḍala of Ṛgveda contains Oṣadhi Sūkta (10.97.1-23). Ṛgveda being the text of our knowledge describes about the healing plants (Oṣadhi). Oṣadhi Sūkta contains twenty three hymns. This Sūkta revealed by Ṛṣi Bhiṣak Atharvaṇa. He belongs to the lineage of Atharvan. It is in Anuṣṭup Vṛtta. Yāska gives the meaning, that which destroys (Dhāyanti) the disease (Oṣat). Oṣadhi usually translated 'herb'. Thus the Sūkta refers to both the growth and the healing thoughts.

### Content of Oṣadhi sūkta at a glance

Herbs were created by god in three seasons earlier. There the one thousand and seven body positions<sup>4</sup> that are relied upon by brown colored Somādi herbs. That means our existence immensely related to herbs. Herbs are addressed as mother. Herbs sprouts and birth places are infinite. That was useful in thousand ways and capable of works on patients in many ways. In this Sūkta, There prayed to Oṣadhi that may please to patient to heal. Both blossoming and bearing fruits, kinds of Oṣadhis triumph over diseases like horses. They were protecting from diseases. Oṣadhis addressed as Mother Deity, there suggested what do for the medical practitioner for the service. The steeds, cows, garments were submitted to medical practitioner. The holy big tree Aśvattha<sup>5</sup> is Oṣadhi's seat. In the Paṇa tree<sup>6</sup> is its dwelling. Were showed the power of Aśvattha and Paṇa tree to healing and these are very important to sacrifices.

When the Oṣadhis come together in one place like princes at the battle, the sage is called as the physician, the slayer of Rākṣasa or demons and the destroyer of diseases. Then the Sūkta says who is a physician, he who knows how the herbs combine together for each disease. Aśvavati, Somavati, Ūrjayanti, Udojas etc. are the powerful herbs that give strength to sick person. Like the cows becoming strong on coming out of the pasture, the energies of the Oṣadhi, are entering of the body, eager to give their richness or power to the sick person. When the sick person has the suitable Oṣadhi, the power came out and treats or heals very much. Oṣadhi's mother is Iṣṛti, meaning destroyer of diseases and its ability is Niṣṛti – inactivity of sick. Like the thief in the cattle shed all the herbs enveloping the body, overthrow the diseases, any ailment in the body is chased out by the Oṣadhi. There revealed the actions and powers of Oṣadhi. Spreading, healing, purifying and get rid of the diseases.

When the sick person grasps with hands these Oṣadhis, which strengthen just like a hunter, the roots of diseases are destroyed. One of the specialties of Oṣadhi 'strengthening' revealed here. Herbs drove away the diseases from him, from limb to limb, from joint to joint, like the mighty prince stationed in the midst of his army. Disease, expel from body, do disappear with the rush of the wind, with the whirl wind. Being with one another, its work together may all the herbs, be in harmony give furtherance to this speech. Whether it fruitful or fruitless, flowering or flowerless may they impel by Bṛhaspati free us from sick. Release sick person from the sin of cursing or from the transgressions of Varuṇa, from the

fetters of Yama and from all the guilt of Gods. Descending from the heaven, the herbs declared, the person, whom they pervade while living will not perishes. The herbs which have, soma for their king which are many, which are all seeing, of them, soma plant are the best make people's heart blissful, by satisfying all desires. The herbs which have soma for their king are spread out on the earth and are born of the Bṛhaspati may they give all sided vigor to this body. Unharmful be the man dig herb up from earth, and let no illness attack biped or quadruped of ours. Those that are here now, and those that may go far away, all come together here, herbs give vigor to body. The entire herbs converse with soma, the king, we save from death the man chosen by the knower of Brahman. Soma, the king, excellent among all trees, all the trees bow down. May that prostrate to us, who attacks us.

### Conclusion

A high quality and vast medical knowledge was prevalent in ancient India. Ṛgveda is the first in Sanskrit literature, the Oṣadhi sūkta complements Ayurveda. Ayurveda is the upaveda of Atharvaveda. Atharvaveda details the Oṣadhis very much, its names, nature, application, and result. Flowers, roots, stems, leaves, fruits of herbs are processed into various medicines particularly or combine with other herbs. Use of herbs parts vary with the nature of diseases and the medicinal properties.

According to Ayurveda, seven hundred marma points are the anatomical locations in our body where a concentration of life energy exists. Herbs were influenced marma points. In the first sūkta indicates the Oṣadhis are works in our main parts of body that the marma points.

yā oṣadhīḥ pūrvā jātā devebhyastriyugaṃ purā |  
manai nu babhrūṇāmahaṃ śataṃ dhāmāni sapta ca ||  
(10/97/01)

Herbs stimulate and revived our body. So the places of herbs are these points. It can be cure diseases, works as a shield of body, protects from illness. Herbs increase the resistance power of body. It rejuvenating people and gives more powers to a sick person. In the Vedic age people may know the medicinal plants or Oṣadhis and its healing power, it's a wonder that Oṣadhi can heal wounds because of that power; it was used in battle fields also. There says the niṣṛti- the mother of Oṣadhi, the meaning of niṣṛti is complete free. Oṣadhi spread all over the body and give free from disease prevents diseases. Oṣadhi Makes the people healthy in physically and mentally.

These indicate different combinations of Oṣadhi than can be applied for specific illness. The Oṣadhis are may be fruitful or fruitless, flowering or flowerless but all the parts of an Oṣadhi can be used appropriate medicine. It gives sustain to all living beings. Atharvaveda also says that Bṛhaspati is the father of Oṣadhi. Oṣadhi sūkta indicates the relevance of Oṣadhi. So the ancient people intended to make know the values and powers of Oṣadhi. They realized what Oṣadhi is, and motivate to preserve them. We must gain knowledge about medicinal plants and protect these herbs. And also teaches how to live healthy, wealthy and safely.

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<sup>4</sup> Marma points

<sup>5</sup> Sacred fig or body tree

<sup>6</sup> Palasa tree

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