THE DRUG TERMINALIA CHEBULA
IN AYURVEDA AND TIBETAN MEDICAL LITERATURE
Vd. Bhagwan Dash

The medicinal plant Terminalia chebula is held in high esteem both in Ayurveda & Tibetan medicine for its property to prevent and cure diseases. In Ayurveda it is known as Harītaki and in Tibetan medicine it is called A-ru-ra. While in Tibetan medicine it is called Sman-mchog rgyal-po,¹ that is the king of the best of medicines, in Ayurveda it is described to be useful to human beings like a mother, "At times even a mother becomes angry but Harītaki never causes any harm to a person who takes it".²

Data on this medicinal plant is available in all classics ³ as well as Nighantus ⁴ or works on materia medica of Ayurveda. In Tibetan literature an exhaustive collection of data is available in the books "An illustrated Tibeto-Mongolia materia Medica of Ayurveda" ⁵ and "Principles of Lamaist Pharmacognosy".⁶

Madanapāla Nighanṭu ⁷ gives the derivation of this term "harītākī" as follows:

1) Because it grows in the place of residence of Hara, that is the Himalayas so it is called Harītakī.

2) Because it is by nature harita (greenish yellow) in colour, so it is called Harītakī, and

3) Because it takes away (Hṛ = to take away) diseases, therefore it is called Harītakī.

In Tibetan language, Haritaki is known as A-ru-ra. In Sherphreng one of the commentaries is quoted to explain the signif-
icance of these syllables. According to this, 'A' indicates that it is the best of medicines and it cures all diseases caused by vāyu, pitta and kapha., 'Ru' indicates that it has flesh, bone and skin which clear diseases of all the three doṣa., and 'Ra' indicates that its body is like that of the Rhinoceros and it clears the diseases of all seven dhātus.

MYTHOLOGICAL STORIES

Many mythological stories about the origin of this drug are found in both Ayurvedic and Tibetan medical literature. They are as follows:

(1) Seven drops of nectar fell down upon the earth from the mouth of Viṣṇu (also according to some from the mouth of Brahmā) giving origin to seven types of Harītaki.¹⁸

(2) Drops of nectar fell down upon the earth from the mouth of Indra giving rise to Harītaki.¹⁹

(3) In the Tibetan literature the above mentioned stories are described in detail. In addition, it has been stated, "For the benefit of sentient creatures, the heavenly nun Matisaṅkarī gathered together a bunch of bluish Vijayā, which were like the head of the horse. She offered that to Manoharī Devī who was Siddha Devī and nirmāṇakāya of Amṛtā, the goddess of medicine. While doing so she said, "Manoharī Devī, kindly hear me. This is the bunch of Vijayā the best of medicines, complete with guṇas and beautiful as well as good in shape. I offer it to you Siddha Devi because of your love for me. Please accept it for the benefit of the later generations of sentient creatures. Please plant this seed of prayer. Its ripe fruit will undoubtedly be good."
In accordance with that saying Manohari Devi took that Harītakī and went to Vajrāsana in Bhārata and offered āvāhana, stuti and pūjā to the Jina prasara of the ten directions. She also requested the guru and Tri-ratnas to have compassion and said, "I am motivated by the force of purity which is free from the deception of hetu and phala. Let there be Siddhi in accordance with the prayer by the strength of truth. Thus Harītakī came into being".  

(4) According to Zur-mkhar dharma-svami quoted in Shel phreng "In the mountain of Gandhamardana situated towards the east of Vārāṇasi, the god of earth Lag-pa-chen-po and the goddess of water Gtsang-chen (Brahmaputra) both had sexual enjoyment by embracing each other and out of that the virya and ārtava got mixed up on the earth. Thus the forest of Harītakī came into being.

SYNONYMS

In Sanskrit literature the following synonyms of this drug have been described:

(1) Abhayā, (2) Amoghā, (3) Amṛtā, (4) Avyathā, (5) Kāyasthā,
(6) Girijā, (7) Cetakī, (8) Cetanikā, (9) Jayā, (10) Jīvanti,
(21) Prapathyā, (22) Prānada, (23) Balyā, (24) Bhīṣag priyā,
(25) Bhīṣag varā, (26) Rasāyana phalā, (27) Rudra priyā, (28) Rohiṇī,
(29) Vayasthā, (30) Vanatiktā, (31) Vijayā, (32) Vṛtatha,
(33) Śāka, (34) Śīvā, (35) Śukra śrsta, (36) Śreyasī, (37) Śudhā,
In Shel phreng\textsuperscript{12} the following synonyms are given:

(1) Abhaya ("Jigs med), (2) Amogha (Don Yod), (3) Amrta ("Chi Med or Bhud rtsi), (4) Aroha dīrgha (Mchu snyung), (5) Avyathā (Nad sel), (6) Cetakī (Sems byed), (7) Dhanyā (Dpal yon can) (8) Dīrghamargghatha (Mchu rings), (9) Divya (Lha rdzas), (10) Haritakī (Tshad pa’ai mdangs ’phrog), (11) Hvava (Bde byed), (12) Jivanti (’Tsho byed), (13) Kaśāyaka (Bska shas Idan), (14) Kāyasthā (Lus gnas byed), (15) Kumbha kantha (Bum mgrin), (16) Kṛṣa (Skem po), (17) Krśālāka (Skem po), (18) Mahā balama (Sa chen), (19) Mahāvītā (Gser Idan), (20) Mūla Dīrgha (Rtsa rings), (21) Mūlarārā (Rtsa snyung), (22) Pavani (Dag byed), (23) Prmatha (Nad rab ’homs), (24) Phalā ("abrās bu can), (25) Prnī (Nad ’dor), (26) Raja hutira (Rgyal bo skem po zer la), (27) Rasa kalkala (Ro bska), (28) Rasavati (Roldan), (29) Rasayana (Bcud len), (30) Samarpku (Nus Idan), (31) Śakravrsta (Brγya byin spros), (32) Sona barna (Gser mdog), (33) Sivā (Zi ba), (34) Śreyasī (Dge legs can), (35) Sūdana (Tshi can), (36) Vardhakara ("Phel byed), (37) Vayasthā (Na tshod gnas), (38) Vijaya (Rnam par rgyal ba).

From the above, it will be seen that seventeen of the synonyms described in Tibetan Medical Literature are identical with those described in Ayurveda and the remaining Twenty one bear some difference.

**VARIETIES**

In Ayurvedic literature the classification of Harītakī varies considerably. A statement providing information regarding Harītakī in different Ayurvedic texts and nihanthus is given following:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Variety</th>
<th>H.S., R.N.</th>
<th>R.B.N.</th>
<th>A.S.</th>
<th>D.N.</th>
<th>N.R.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vijayā</td>
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<td>(x)</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>(x)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rohini</td>
<td>(x)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pūtanā</td>
<td>(x)</td>
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<td>Amṛtā</td>
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<td>(-)</td>
<td>(x)</td>
<td>(x)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cetakī</td>
<td>(x)</td>
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<td>(x)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abhayā</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Jayā</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haimavatī</td>
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</table>

**Legends:**
- H.S. = Hārīta saṃhitā, R.N. = Rāja Nighantu, S.G.N. = Sāligrāma nighantu, B.P. = Bhāva-prākaśa,
- R.B.N. = Rājavallabha nighantu,
- A.S. = Atreya saṃhitā,
- D.N. = Dhanvantari nighantu,
- N.R. = Nighantu ratnākara,
- (x) = description available,
- (-) = description not available

In the book Lamaist Pharmacognosy, Views of various authors, both Indian and Tibetan, are quoted in connection with the classification of this drug. According to Bḍud-rtsi-snying-po it is of seven types. They are (1) Rnam par rgyal ba (Vijayā), (2) Bum gyi mgrin (Kalasha kantha), (3) Gso byed (Āyuh-yardhaka), (4) Bḍud rtsi (Amṛta), (5) 'Jigs med (Abhayā), (6) 'phel byed (Vṛddhikāra) and (7) Skam po (Suska).
According to Tibetan medical Literature, Vijaya is the most important type and it is exceedingly useful in the treatment of diseases. Other varieties are considered to be only secondary or subsidiary to Vijaya in therapeutic attributes. In Ayurvedic literature only Raja nighantu has laid emphasis on the superiority of Vijaya over others.

IDENTIFICATION OF VARIOUS TYPES

Physical characteristics as well as therapeutic attributes of various types of Haritaki are described both in Ayurveda and Tibetan medical Literature with a view to help in their identification.

According to Bhava prakasa nighantu, Vijaya has the shape of a gourd, Rohini is round in shape, Putana contains proportionately a bigger stone, Amrti is fleshy, Abhayi contains five ridges, Jivanti is golden in colour and Cetaki has three ridges. In this regard, there are different types of description in other Ayurvedic works.

According to Brang-ti-pa, as quoted in Shel Phreng the variety Rnam par rgyal ba (Vijaya) is characterised by closed lips, and fine neck, Gser mdog (Kanaka varna) is of golden colour and like a round bulb and it possesses either five or eight ridges (wrinkles), Sa chen (Mamsala) is fleshy, "Bigs byed (Vindkya) is black and it has no stone in the centre and Snung (Suksm) has many wrinkles."
HABITAT

According to Shel phreng,\textsuperscript{17} Vijaya which is the best of all varieties, grows in the celestial palace of the Yaksa Vaisravana and from there it was taken to the mountain Gandhamardana (Spos-ngad-ldan).\textsuperscript{18} It is emphasized by various Tibetan authors that the Vijaya type of Haritaki, which is the best of all, is available only on this mountain.

It is stated in Gso-dpyad phrang bu\textsuperscript{19} that it was difficult for non-Aryans to procure this drug from the magical mountain of Gandhamardana. Therefore, the seeds of this were planted in other places of the earth. According to Zur-mkhar Dharmaswami,\textsuperscript{20} all the varieties of Haritaki that grow in Bhārata are collectively called Tra-la-ha and that of Tibet is Klu-sin 'θ-‘bu.

According to Zur-rdol,\textsuperscript{21} all the five types of Haritaki grow in the same tree in the centre is Vijaya, in the eastern side is Abhava, in the Southern side is Mamsala, in the western side is Rohini, in the northern side is Suska. In Brang-ti-pa similar type of description is also available but only the names of the varieties differ.

In this connection the description available in Ayurvedic literature is different. Even though all Ayurvedic works are not unanimous in their view, still in the majority of them it is stated that Vijaya grows in Vindhya mountain (Gandhamardana according to Tibetan literature), Cetaki and Putana grow in the Himalayas, Rohini grows in Sindh, Amrta and Abhaya in Camoar(?) and Jivanti grows in Saurashtra.

Thus, unlike Tibetan literature, in Ayurveda not much signif-
icance is attached to Gandhamardana regarding the habitat of this drug.

BOTANICAL CHARACTERISTICS

According to Khrungs-dpe, this tree possesses a great trunk, its leaves are thick, the flower is yellow and fruit is blackish-yellow. In various other texts the characteristic features of this fruit are described. Such type of descriptions are not available in the extant Ayurvedic texts.

SIMILIES

In literature on Tibetan medicine similies for different parts of this drug are available. According to Gso-dpyad Phrang-bu leaves of this drug are like Pa-nca-li-ka (?) and flowers like those of U-dam-bar (fig tree). According to 'Dra-yig (Upamāna tantra), Harītakī is like a small dried piece of tumeric.

According to 'Dra-dpe, another work on similies, Vijayā is like the tail of a gourd (Alābu). Its flowers are golden yellow, like a golden egg. They are like a swollen frog. Abhayā is like the egg of tadpole. It is like a rounded pot. This type of upama are rare in extant Ayurvedic works.

RASA, VIRYA, VIPAKA AND GUNA

According to Ayurvedic literature, Harītakī has five different tastes viz., madhura (sweet), amla (sour), katu (pungent), tikta (bitter) and kasāya (astringent). It has been repeatedly emphasized that this drug is free from lavana (saline) taste. In Tibetan medical literature this point has been discussed in detail and various
Indian authors have been quoted in this connection. But some Tibetan scholars do not agree with the observation of Indian authors. The author of Shel phreng \(^{26}\) seems to have contacted various yogis from India but he was not convinced by the arguments advanced by them. Therefore, he holds that Haritäkī has all the six types of tastes viz., mnar-ba (sweet), skyur ba (sour) lan-
tshwa ba (saline), tsha ba (pungent), kha ba (bitter) and bska ba (astringent).

According to Ayurvedic literature, this drug is usna or hot in virya (potency). In Tibetan medical literature\(^ {27}\) it is considered to possess eight nus pas (virya or potency), viz. (1) lci va (guru or heavy), (2) snum pa (snigdha or unctuous), (3) bsil ba (atisita or excessively cold), (4) rtul-ba (manda or dull), (5) yang ba (laghu or light), (6) rtsub pa (ruksa or dryness), (7) tsha ba usna or hot) and (8) rno ba (tiksna or sharp).\(^ {28}\)

Vipāka\(^ {29}\) of this drug according to Ayurveda is madhura (sweet). But according to Tibetan medical literature the Zhu rjes (vipāka) of this drug is mnar ba (madhura or sweet), skyur ba (amla or sour) and kha ba (katu or pungent).\(^ {30}\)

Laghū (lightness) and ruksa (dryness) - these two are considered in Ayurvedic literature to be the guṇas (attributes) of Haritäkī. According to the Tibetan medical literature however this drug has seventeen yon tan (guna or attribute)\(^ {31}\) viz., (1) 'ajam pa (mrdu or soft), (2) lci ba (guru or heavy), (3) dro ba (usna or hot), (4) snum pa (snigdha or unctuous), (5) brtan pa (sthirā or stable, (6) grang ba (śīta or cold), (7) rtul ba (manda or dull),
(8) bshil ba (ati sīta or excessively cold), (9) mnyen ba (slaksna or smooth), (10) sla ba (drava or liquid), (11) skam pa (suska or dry), (12) skya ba (śandra or density), (13) tsha ba (usna or hot) (14) yang ba (laghu or light), (15) rno ba (tiksna or sharp), (16) rtsub pa (kathina or hard) & (17) gyo ba (sara or fluid). The manner in which these attributes help in correcting the vitiating dosas and ḍhātus is described in detail in the Tibetan medical literature. Ayurvedic literature is very specific about the five rasas of this drug.

THERAPEUTIC ATTRIBUTES

According to some authors of Tibetan medicine, other varieties of Harītakī have therapeutic properties almost similar to Vijaya. This view has been strongly repudiated by other scholars of Tibetan medicine according to whom "the wise laugh at such description by the stupid". In Ayurvedic literature, as stated before, Vijaya variety is not given that much of importance even though by some it is considered to be a cure for all types of diseases. Other varieties of Harītakī have different specific therapeutic properties. According to Rāja-Vallabha Nighantu, Jivanti is useful as a medicine for oleation therapy, Rohini is useful in the treatment of Ksayaroga (Consumption), Vijaya is useful in all types of therapies, Pūtana is useful in medicines for external application, Amrta is useful as a purgative, Abhayā is useful in eye diseases and Kalika is useful in the removal of foul smell of ulcers.

In Tibetan Medical Literature different parts of the plant are stated to have different therapeutic properties. According to
Zur mkhar Dharma Svami, its root clears the diseases of the bone, the stem clears the diseases of the muscles, the bark clears skin diseases, the branches clear the diseases of the vessels, the leaves clear diseases of āsāyas (viscera) and the fruits clear diseases of the vital organs and heart. In Ayurvedic literature such a type of description is not available.

**SUMMARY**

Medical literatures of India and Tibet are closely interrelated. In spite of it, there are conspicuous and significant differences between these two types of literature while describing various aspects of medicine. The drug Terminalia chebula is very popular and commonly used by the practitioners of the traditional systems of medicine of both these countries. In this paper an attempt has been made to briefly survey the literature of both these systems.

1Principles of Lamaist Pharmacognosy: Folio-172.

2Harītakī manusyaṇām māteva hitakārini //

Kadācit kupyate māta nodarasthā harītakī //

3The following are the most important Ayurvedic classics:

(I) Caraka saṃhitā originally composed by Agnivesa and subsequently redacted by Caraka. It was composed prior to 700 B.C.
(II) Susruta samhitā originally composed by Susruta and subsequently redacted by Nāgārjuna. It was composed prior to 700 B.C.

(III) Astānga hṛdaya by Vāgbhata (300 A.D.).

The above mentioned three books are jointly known as Vṛddha trayī (Edler-trio) or Brhat trayī (Great-trio). Other Ayurvedic classics are Kāśyapa samhitā originally composed by Kāśyapa and subsequently redacted by Vṛddha Jīvaka, Bhela samhitā by Bhela, Astāṅga saṃgraha by Vāgbhata and Hārita samhitā by Hārita.

Nighantus are compilations on synonyms, general description and therapeutics of drugs which include vegetables, minerals, and animal products. The important ones are Dhanvantari nighantu (1100 A.D.) Rāja nighantu (1200 A.D.), Madanapāla nighantu (1400 A.D.), Sodhala nighantu (1400 A.D.), Kayadeva nighantu (1500 A.D.), and Bhāvaprakāśa nighantu (1600 A.D.). These works were compiled during the medieval period from some classical works many of which are no more extant.

Composed by a 'Jan-dpal-rdo-rje of Mongolia and published by Dr. Lokesh Chandra, International Academy of Indian Culture, New Delhi, (1971). Drawings and Paintings of drugs of vegetable, mineral and animal origin are rare in Ayurvedic literature whereas such works are available in considerable number in Tibetan medical literature.

This work contains three texts, i.e. Dri med shel gong, Dri med shel phreng and the Lag len gces bsdus of Dil-dmar dge-bshes Bstan-'dzin-phun-tshogs. In the Shel gong descriptions of many drugs are available, and the Shel phreng is an auto-commentary in
prose on the former. This was composed in the 18th century in 
Eastern Tibet (Khams) by the exceptionally learned Kargyupa (Dkar-
brgyud-pa) scholar. He was a contemporary of the great Si-tu 
Pan-chen Chos-kyi-'byung-gnas (1699/1700-1774). The Shel gong 
and Shel phreng are based largely on Ayurvedic sources (both Indic 
and Tibetan) but the author also seems to have studied Chinese 
medicine. There are extant separate works by him on Acupuncture 
and Moxa.

He has arranged all medicinal substances and treatments into 
thirteen categories, viz. (1) Rin po che'i sman (Gems and metals), 
(2) Rdo sman (Medicinal substances derived from rocks and minerals), 
(3) Sa sman (Medicinal earths), (4) Rtsi sman (Exudates and secre-
tions), (5) Shing sman (Medicinal substances obtained from trees), 
(6) Thang sman (Medicines prepared from the boiled extracts of 
various parts of plants), (7) Sngo sman (Medicinal plants herbs and 
grasses), (8) Lan tshwa'i sde tshan (Medicinal salts), (9) Srog 
chags las byung ba'i sman (Medicines obtained from sentient crea-
tures), (10) Zhing gi lo tog (Cultivated plants), (11) Chu'i sman 
(Medicinal waters), (12) Me'i sman (Medicinal fires), (13) Gdugs 
pa'i sman (Use of fire and water in medicinal preparations). In 
the Shel phreng, while describing various aspects of the drug 
Terminalia chebula, the following important sources or authors, 
among others have been quoted: (1) Gso dpyad phran bu (a small 
bundle of medical works), (2) Gyu-thog-nying-ma (the eldest of a 
family of famous doctors), (3) 'Tsho-mdzad Gzhon-nu (Kumāra 
Jīvaka), (4) Zur rdol (a book of the famous Zur school of medicine), 
(5) Zur-mkhar Dharma-Swāmi, (6) Brang-ti-pa (a family of famous
physicians), (7) Rtsa rgyud (Mūla tantra), (8) Bshad rgyud (Ākhyāta tantra), (9) Yan lag nag po'i rgyud (Kṛṣṇāṅga tantra), (10) Bbud rtsi bum pa (Amṛta kalasa), (11) Gser-'od (Suvarṇa prabhāsa), (12) Drang-srong Tsa-ra-ka (Caraka muni), (13) A-tsa-ra'i rdo skor (name of a work on magic), (14) Yan lag brgyad pa (Astāṅga) (15) 'Dra dpe (a work on similes), (16) 'Dra yig (a work on similes), (17) Klu-sgrub (Nāgārjuna), (18) Bbud-rtsi-snying-po (Amṛta hṛdaya), (19) Tsa-ra-ka'ai Bbud rtsi (Amṛta of Caraka), (20) Rin-po-che Tsa-pa-shila-ha (Lama Campasilaha), (21) Rgyu mtshan rgyud (Pramāṇa tantra), (22) Klu-rgyud (Nāga tantra) (23) Phyi-ma rgyud (Uttara tantra), (24) Tsa-ra-ka'ai 'greł pa (Commentary of/on Caraka), (25) 'Khrungs dpe (name of a compilation work).

7 Harasya bhavane jātā haritāsca svabhāvatah.

Harayet sarvarogānsca tena proktā harītakī Madanapāla Nighantū: 1:8.

8 Bhavabrākaśa:

9 Bhāvaprakāsa Nighantū: 1:5.

10 Lamaist Pharmacognosy: Folio 173.

11 Ibid: Folio - 175.


14 Rājanighantū: 11:318.


16 Lamaist Pharmacognosy: Folio - 176.

17 Lamaist Pharmacognosy - Folio - 173.

18 There are two mountains in Orissa at present – one in Bolangir District and the other in Mayurbhanj District-which are known as Gandhamārdana. They belong to the range of the Eastern Ghats and
these two mountains are full of Haritaki trees. In fact this plant, which is also used in tanning, in addition to its medicinal properties, is one of the important minor forest products of the State.

19 Lamaist Pharmacognosy - Folio - 174.

20 Ibid: Folio - 175.
23 Ibid: Folio - 173.
24 Ibid: Folio - 188.
25 Ibid: Folio - 188.
26 Lamaist Pharmacognosy: Folio - 180.

29 The taste developed after digestion of a drug or food ingredient is known as vipāka.

31 Lamaist Pharmacognosy: Folio - 178.

32 These gunas or attributes are named with a symbolic meaning. It is not that this drug is both heavy and light or hot and cold and the like. These gunas or attributes actually indicate the effect this drug produces on the body. Depending upon the various circumstances prevailing in the body this drug produces different effects—ekeven opposite ones—on the body. For details about these attributes a reference may be made to the book "Concept of Agni in Ayurveda" published by Chawkamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, India.
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(8) Dhanvantari Nighantu, Anandasrama, Poona (1896).

(9) Rāja Nighantu, Anandasrama, Poona (1925).


(13) Vāṅga Sena, Khemaraja Srikrisna das, Bombay (19__).


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