

## viii. Basic understanding of nighaṇṭu and kośa of Āyurveda

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## Definition and Purpose

### 1. Nighaṇṭu

- The term “**nighaṇṭu**” generally refers to **lexicons or compendia** of medicinal substances (particularly herbs, minerals, animal products).
- These works compile **synonyms, properties (guṇas), dosage forms, therapeutic uses, and contraindications**.
- Act as **reference guides** for vaidyas (practitioners) to identify remedies and understand their various Sanskrit synonyms and key attributes.

### 2. Kośa

- **Kośa** means “dictionary” or “encyclopedia glossary.”
- In an Ayurvedic context, **kośas** often include **terminologies**, definitions of key concepts, and sometimes cross-references to classical texts.
- They may not be strictly limited to pharmacology; many **Ayurvedic kośas** also clarify doṣic terms, procedural nomenclatures, etc.

## Difference Between Nighaṇṭu and Kośa

- A **nighaṇṭu** is more **pharmacologically oriented**, focusing on listing and detailing **dravyas** (substances).
- A **kośa** can be broader or specialized in other aspects of **Ayurvedic lexicon**, clarifying usage of terms related to pathology, procedures, or theoretical constructs.

## Historical Roots of Nighaṇṭus

- The earliest known compendia trace to **Vedic** and **post-Vedic** eras, where synonyms and references to medicinal herbs appear in texts like the **R̥g Veda** and **Atharva Veda**.
- Over time, scholars compiled stand-alone works focused on the **dravyas** used in Ayurveda, providing **expanded detail** on synonyms and properties.

## Notable Nighaṇṭus

1. **Dhanvantari Nighaṇṭu** (circa 10th century CE)
  - Often considered one of the older stand-alone nighaṇṭus.
  - Lists numerous medicinal plants with their synonyms in Sanskrit.
2. **Bhāvaprakāśa Nighaṇṭu** (part of the Bhāvaprakāśa text by Bhāvamiśra, 16th century CE)
  - Widely cited for its **categorization** of dravyas based on rasa, guṇa, vīrya, vipāka, and karmas.
  - Contains valuable notes on **commonly used** as well as **rare** herbs.
3. **Rāja Nighaṇṭu** (aka Madanapāla Nighaṇṭu)
  - Focuses extensively on **plant-based** remedies and provides a variety of synonyms, morphological details, and uses.
4. **Kaiyadeva Nighaṇṭu**
  - Another classical herbal dictionary, recognized for systematic listing of synonyms and properties.

These nighaṇṭus often overlap in content but each brings unique regional synonyms, or specialized interpretive notes.

## Kośas in the Ayurvedic Context

- While not as numerous as nighaṇṭus, **Ayurvedic kośas** do exist, intended as **dictionaries** of medical and philosophical terms.
- Some kośas also incorporate **quotations** from classical Saṃhitās, bridging textual references for a more robust

understanding.

## Examples of Kośas

1. **Āyurveda Kośa** by various modern scholars
  - Attempts to compile definitions from Caraka, Suśruta, and other sources in one place.
2. **Vaidyamanorama Kośa** and similar works
  - Provide translations and clarifications of specialized Ayurvedic words/phrases, including references to doṣic or dhātu-based contexts.

## Importance of Nighaṇṭu and Kośa

1. **Standardizing Medicinal Knowledge**
  - Provide **consistent references** for practitioners to identify substances, preventing confusion caused by multiple regional or vernacular names.
2. **Bridging Textual Gaps**
  - Aid in understanding older Sanskrit verses where synonyms or archaic references could be misinterpreted.
3. **Enhancing Research**
  - Contemporary researchers rely on **nighaṇṭu** for cross-checking **botanical identification** and verifying classical properties of plants/minerals.
4. **Educational Tool**

Kośas help students and practitioners **master** Ayurvedic terminology, essential for accurate interpretation of classical Saṃhitās.