viii. Basic understanding of nighanţu and kośa of Āyurveda

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Definition and Purpose

1. Nighanţu

- The term "nighaṇṭu" generally refers to lexicons or compendia of medicinal substances (particularly herbs, minerals, animal products).
- These works compile synonyms, properties (gunas), 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 "encyclopedic 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 doșic terms, procedural nomenclatures, etc.

Difference Between Nighanțu 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 Nighantus

- The earliest known compendia trace to **Vedic** and **post-Vedic** eras, where synonyms and references to medicinal herbs appear in texts like the **Rg 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 Nighanțus

- 1. Dhanvantari Nighantu (circa 10th century CE)
 - o Often considered one of the older stand-alone nighantus.
 - o 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, guna, 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 Nighaņţu

o Another classical herbal dictionary, recognized for systematic listing of synonyms and properties.

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

Kośas in the Ayurvedic Context

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

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Examples of Kośas

- 1. Āyurveda Kośa by various modern scholars
 - o 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 doşic or dhātu-based contexts.

Importance of Nighantu 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
 - o Aid in understanding older Sanskrit verses where synonyms or archaic references could be misinterpreted.
- 3. Enhancing Research
 - Contemporary researchers rely on nighanțu 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 Samhitās.

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