

viii. Basic understanding of nighaṇṭu and koṣa 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. Koṣa

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

Difference Between Nighaṇṭu and Koṣa

- A **nighaṇṭu** is more **pharmacologically oriented**, focusing on listing and detailing **dravyas** (substances).
- A **koṣa** 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 **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 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.

Koṣas in the Ayurvedic Context

- While not as numerous as nighaṇṭus, **Ayurvedic koṣas** do exist, intended as **dictionaries** of medical and philosophical terms.
- Some koṣas 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.