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Pharmacological aspects of *Sigru* (*Moringa Oleifera* Lam.) in view of Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT

The medicinal value of a drug is usually determined based on its pharmacological properties. In traditional practice *Sigru* (*Moringa oleifera* Lam.) is used in the management of various diseases. It is necessary to have knowledge of the pharmacological attributes of a drug to use it correctly for the treatment. The pharmacological properties of *Sigru* has been explained in various ancient text books of Ayurveda. This review will keep an eye on the different properties of *Sigru* mentioned in various Ayurveda text books.

Key words: *Sigru*, *Moringa oleifera*, Pharmacological property, Ayurveda.

INTRODUCTION

Sigru is the Sanskrit name of the plant *Moringa oleifera*. It is the most widely cultivated species of the genus *Moringa*, which is the only genus in the family Moringaceae. It is a native of the sub-Himalayan northern parts of India, it is cultivated throughout tropical and sub-tropical areas of the world. *Moringa oleifera* Lam. is an exceptionally nutritious vegetable tree with a variety of potential uses. A wide variety of nutritional and medicinal virtues have been attributed to its roots, bark, leaves flowers, fruits, and seeds. *M. oleifera* is variably labeled as Miracle Tree, Tree of Life, Mother's Best Friend, God's Gift to Man, Savior of the Poor. It is considered one of the world's

most useful trees, as almost every part of the *Moringa* tree can be used for food or has some other beneficial property. Most of the sites present this plant as a remedy to malnutrition and a vast range of ailments. In many regions of Africa, it is widely consumed for self-medication by patients affected by diabetes, hypertension, or HIV/AIDS.^[1]

Medicinal virtues of the plant '*Sigru*' have long been known and appreciated in India. Vedas are the earliest known documentation about the medicinal uses of plants in Indian literature. Rig-Veda, which is known as the first Veda documented the plant '*Sigru*' as a domestic plant. In *Kousika Sutra*, *Sigru* was mentioned in the treatment of *Krimi-roga*. In *Adharva Veda*, *Sigru* is mentioned for *Uchaadana Karma*. *Dharma Sutra* prohibits its utility as tooth brush as well as in rituals.^[2]

Moringa was highly valued in the ancient world. Some points regarding *Moringa* from the history are, The Romans, Greeks and Egyptians extracted edible oil from the seeds and used it for perfume and skin lotion. *Moringa* oil was used for skin protection in the desert weather by Ancient Egyptians. In ancient India, Maurian warriors were fed *Moringa* leaf extract in the war front. The leaf extract was believed to have given the warriors extra stamina and strength. On the island of Jamaica, *Moringa* oil was used for culinary

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purposes, and was equal to the best Florence oil as an illuminant giving clear light without smoke. In 19th century, plantations of *Moringa* in the West Indies exported the oil to Europe for perfumes and lubricants for machinery.^[3]

All these points out to the importance of the plant *Sigrū*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The medicinal value of a drug is usually determined by its pharmacological properties. The pharmacological properties of a plant is explained in Ayurveda using a specific tool known as *Rasapanchaka*. i.e.; *Rasa, Guna, Veerya, Vipaka* and *Karma*.

Rasa is the attribute of the drug which is experienced by an individual on consumption or by tasting it.^[4]

Guna is an entity which has an inherent relation with *Dravya* (drug) and has a non-inherent relation with *Karma*.^[5] The quality obtained after the completion of digestion of a *Dravya* (drug) is known as *Vipaka*.^[6]

Veerya is the force or energy of a *Dravya* (drug) through which the *Dravya* (drug) perform any action.^[7] *Karma* is an entity in the *Dravya*, which is responsible for *Samyoga* (association) and *Vibhaga* (dissociation). This entity is in an inherent relation with *Dravya* and is responsible for a specific action.^[8]

Ayurveda practitioners usually follow authentic classical text books. They include *Samhitas* or *Samgrahas* like *Susrutha Samhita, Charaka Samhita, Ashtanga Samgraham* and *Nighantus* like *Abhidhana Manjari, Ayurveda Chintamani, Ayurvedeeya Oshadhi Nighantu, Bhavaprakasa Nighantu, Dhanwanthari Nighantu, Madanapala Nighantu, Kaiyadeva Nighantu, Nighantu Adarsh, Rajanighantu* and *Saligrama Nighantu Bhooshan*.

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Table 1: Pharmacological properties of *Moringa* in *Samhitas / Samgrahas*

Book	Rasa	Guna	Veerya	Vipaka	Doshakarma
<i>Susrutha Samhita</i> ^[9]	<i>Katu, Kshara, Madhura,</i>	<i>Pichila</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Vatasleshm ahara</i> Flower - <i>Kaphapithak</i>

	<i>Tikta</i>				<i>hnam</i> Fruit - <i>Kaphavatak hnam</i>
<i>Charaka Samhita</i> ^[10]	<i>Katu</i>	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Leaf & Fruit - <i>Kaphavatak hnam</i>
<i>Ashtanga Samgraham</i> ^[11]	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Lakhu, Rooksha, Theekshnam</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Dosha Utkleshana m</i>

Table 2: Pharmacological properties of *Moringa* in *Nighantus*

Book	Rasa	Guna	Veerya	Vipaka	Doshakarma
<i>Abhidhana Manjari</i> ^[12]	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	<i>Anilajit</i>
<i>Ayurveda Chintamani</i> ^[13]	<i>Katu, Madhura, Thikta</i>	<i>Theekshna, Laghu, Rooksha, Kshara</i>	Not mentioned	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Kaphavatas amana, Pitharaktap rakopana</i>
<i>Bhavaprakasa Nighantu</i> ^[14]	<i>Thikta, Katu, Madhura</i>	<i>Theekshna, Laghu, Rooksha, Kshara</i> Seed - <i>Theekshna</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Kaphavatak hnam, Pitharaktap rakopanam</i>
<i>Dhanwanthari Nighantu</i> ^[15]	<i>Katu, Thikta</i>	Not mentioned	<i>Ushna</i>	Not mentioned	<i>Kaphavatas amanam</i>
<i>Kaiyadeva Nighantu</i> ^[16]	<i>Madhura, Thikta, Katu</i>	<i>Theekshna, Laghu, Rooksha</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Katu</i>	<i>Kaphavatak hnam, Pitharaktap rakopanam</i>

		a, Kshara			
Madan apala Nighant u ^[17]	Not menti oned	Theeks hna, Laghu	Ushna	Not mentio ned	Kaphavataji t, Raktapithak rit
Nighant u Adarsh ^[18]	Katu, Thikta	Theeks hna, Laghu, Rooksh a, Kshara	Ushna	Katu	Vatakaphas amana
Rajanig hantu ^[19]	Katu, Thikta	Theeks hna	Ushna	Not mentio ned	Vatakaphas amana

RESULTS

While going through the different references of *Moringa*, it is found that the plant is having a dominance of *Katu* and *Tikta Rasa*. It also have a dominance of *Laghu*, *Theekshna* and *Rooksha Gunas*. It is mainly an *Ushna Veerya* dominant plant. It have a *Katu Vipaka*. The specific action of *Moringa* is *Kaphavatahara* (reducing the *Kapha* and *Vata Doshas*). It is also found that *Moringa* will increase the *Pitha* and *Rakta* of an individual.

DISCUSSION

Though there are difference in opinions, *Sigru* is having a dominance of *Katu* and *Tikta Rasa*. Opinion of having *Madhura Rasa* for the plant can be considered as *Anurasa*^[20] (the taste which is perceived after the perception of the primary taste and is not easy to perceive distinctly). The total number of *Gunas* as per Ayurveda is twenty and they are termed as *Vimsathi Gunas*. Some authors does not include the *Kshara Guna* among the *Vimsathi Gunas* (twenty *Gunas*). So while considering the *Gunas* of *Sigru* they have not mentioned about the *Kshara Guna*. Different authors are having unique opinion about the *Veerya*, *Vipaka* and *Karma* of the plant *Sigru*. But the author of *Ashtanga Samgraha* has the opinion that *Sigru* has *Dosha Utkleshana* property, which means it will help to vitiate the three *Doshas Vata*, *Pitta* and

Kapha. As per different authors *Sigru* will increase *Pitta Dosha* when taken internally but it is found to decrease the symptoms of *Pitta Dosha* on external application in practice.

CONCLUSION

Since *Moringa* is *Kaphavatahara* it can be used in the treatment of diseases which are dominant in *Kapha* and *Vata Doshas*. And it cannot be used in the treatment of diseases dominant with *Pitta* and *Rakta* because the drug will increase *Pitta* and *Rakta*.

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