

BHURJAPATRA (*BETULA UTILIS*) IN AYURVEDIC CLASSICAL LITERATURE: A  
REVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

*Bhurjapatra* (*Betula utilis* D. Don) is commonly known as *Bhojpatra* or Himalayan Birch. Besides its traditional use as a writing material, it is one among the important medicinal plants of *Ayurvedic* literature. This present review was undertaken to compile and analyse available references of *Bhurjapatra* from classical texts of *Charak Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Raj Nighantu*, *Kaideva Nighantu* and *Bhavprakash Nighantu*. Literary review reveals its use in *Prasuti Tantra* (obstetrics) conditions such as *Prasava Vedana*, *Prasava Sanga*, retained placenta, and *Yoni Dhoopana*. *Nighantu* references also describe its utility in *Karnaroga* (ear related conditions), *Medoroga* (obesity), *Visharoga* (Poisoning), *Kapha* disorders, *Pitta-Rakta* dushti (vitiation), and protective applications related to *Bhootagraha Badha* (one among the *Ashtanga Ayurveda*). The described pharmacodynamics includes *Kashaya* dominant *rasa*, *Ushna virya*, and actions such as *Tridoshaghna* and *Pitta-Rakta shamana*. *Bhurjapatra* has notable historical and medicinal relevance. However, further pharmacognostical, phytochemical, pharmacological, and clinical studies are required to validate its traditional claims and promote evidence-based contemporary use.

**KEYWORDS:** *Bhurjapatra*, *Betula utilis*, *Ayurveda*, *Bhootagraha*, *Nighantu*, *Dhoopana*.

## INTRODUCTION

*Bhurjapatra* (*Betula utilis* D. Don.), commonly known as *Bhojpatra* is a deciduous tree of moderate size of family *Betulaceae*. In different languages it is referred to by different names, in Hindi and Gujarati it is called *Bhojpatra*, in Marathi – *Bhurjapatra*, in Bengali – *Bhurrijjapatra*. While in English, it is called *Jacquemon tree*.

In ancient times, the bark of the tree of *Bhurjapatra* was used to prepare manuscripts, on which *shlokas*, *mantras*, and many other literatures were written. The medicinal properties in *Bhurjapatra* also have their unique features. Today, many of the medicinal plants are forgotten as they are believed not to be useful, but the irony is these plants possess pharmacological properties which are essential to mankind.

For understanding of the topic, few key concepts of *Dravyaguna* i.e. *Ayurvedic Pharmacology*, must be known. The *Dravya* (substance), can also be considered

as medicine or drug, in which *Guna* and *Karma* are *Aashrita* (present).<sup>[1]</sup> Also, according to *Vaisheshika Darshana*, *Dravya* has *Samvaya Sambandha* (inherent relationship) with *Guna* and *Karma*.<sup>[2]</sup>

The terms *Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya*, *Vipaka* and *Prabhava* are collectively known as '*Raspanchaka*'.

In *Charak Samhita*, six main *Rasa* (tastes), which are *Swadu* or *Madhura* (sweet), *Amla* (sour), *Lavana* (salty), *Katu* (pungent), *Tikta* (bitter) and *Kashaya* (astringent).<sup>[3]</sup> *Guna* resides in the *Dravya* and does not perform any action independently, therefore itself is inactive.<sup>[4]</sup> *Virya* (potency) is the energy of the *Dravya* or the factor responsible for any action. In certain circumstances *Vipaka*, *Guna* and *Prabhava* also becomes *Virya*.<sup>[5]</sup>

The final outcome of *Rasa*, after the influence of *Jatharagni* (digestive fire) is called *Vipaka*.<sup>[6]</sup> According to the *Trividha Vipaka Vada* (Theory of three *Vipaka*),

*Madhura*, *Amla* and *Katu* are the three *Vipaka*. The *Madhura* and *Lavana Rasa* have *Madhura Vipaka*, *Amla Rasa* have *Amla Vipaka*, whereas *Katu*, *Tikta* and *Kashaya Rasa* have *Katu Vipaka*.<sup>[7]</sup>

Many *Aacharyas* considered *Prabhava* as *Achintya*, as its mode of action cannot be explained. Even if two *Dravya* have similar *Rasa*, *Virya* and *Vipaka* but each one

will have its own peculiar action which is inexplicable.<sup>[8]</sup> *Karma* in *Dravya* is responsible for the *Samyoga* (association) and *Vibhaga* (dissociation), thus performing specific action of the *Dravya*.<sup>[9]</sup> Thus understanding these concepts briefly gives proper understanding of a *Ayurvedic* medicine.



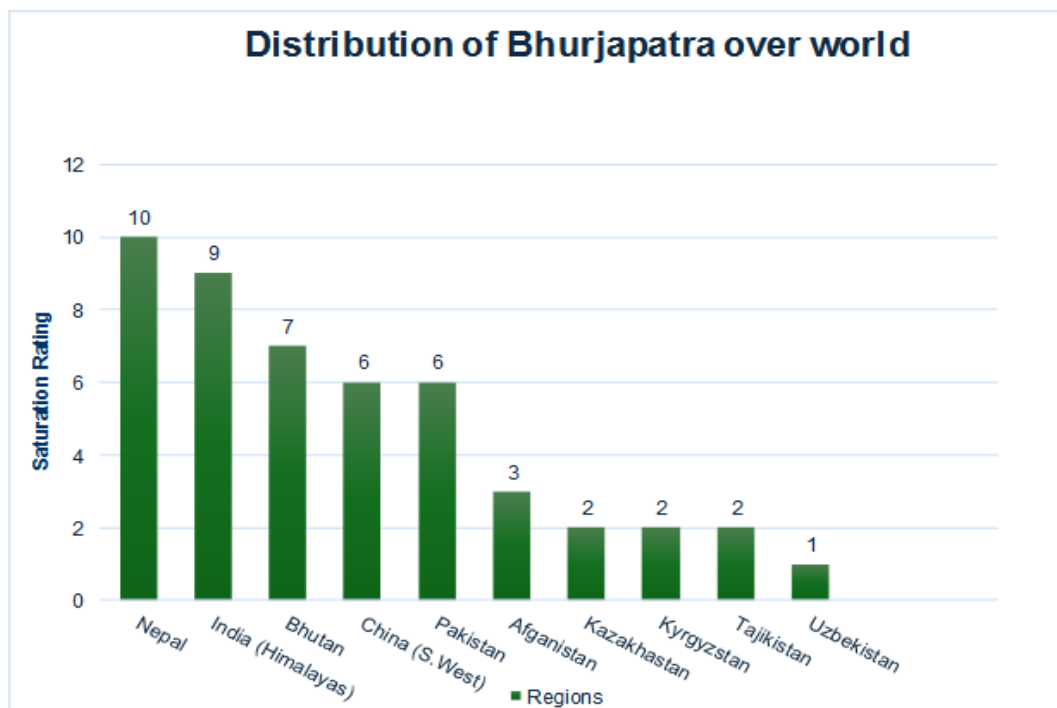
### Botanical Description

*Bhurjapatra* tree also known as Himalayan Birch, grows to a height of 12-18 meters. **Bark** is reddish-white in colour and is thin as the sheet of paper. Bark keeps exfoliating from the tree in *Anuprastha Disha* (parallel to the ground). **Branches** are *Shweta-Varniya Raktabh* (whitish red) in colour. **Leaves** are 2-3 inches long, 1½ inches broad and *Lambagra* (Long tip), *Binduyukta* (Dotted), *Dantura* (Serrated). *Patrasira* (veins of leaves)

are 9-12 in pairs. *Beeja* are *Pakshayukta* (Dicotyledonous). **Flowering** occurs in *Grishma Ritu*, while **fruiting** occurs in *Sharad Ritu*.<sup>[10]</sup>

### Distribution

It grows typically in regions of *Himalayas* from nearly 5,000 feet above the sea level to 14,000 feet. And from Sikkim and Bhutan to *Paschima*.<sup>[11]</sup>



**Raspanchaka**

The basic therapeutical knowledge of *Dravya* is based on its *Raspanchaka* and *Karma*. The *Dravya* derives its uniqueness from these properties. Similarly, for *Bhurjapatra*, the *Raspanchaka* are as follows;

1. **Rasa:** *Kashaya* (*Bhavprakash Nighantu*, *Kaideva Nighantu*), *Katu-Kashaya* (*Raj Nighantu*)
2. **Guna:** *Laghu*
3. **Virya:** *Ushna*
4. **Vipaka:** *Katu*
5. **Prabhava:** *Tridoshaghna* (*Bhavprakash Nighantu*, *Raj Nighantu*), *Pitta-Shonita Shamaka* (*Kaideva Nighantu*)

**Review of Literature**

In the Era of *Samhita* and *Nighantu*, medical significance of *Bhurja* was efficiently groomed by the *Aacharyas*.

**1. Charak Samhita** (3<sup>rd</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> Cent. BC).

*Bhagwan Aatreya* specifically advises administration of *Bhurja* during pregnancy in females.

... भूर्जपत्रधूमशिशपासारधूमं वा ।।<sup>[12]</sup>

*Dhoopana* (fumigation) to *Yoni Marg* is given using the leaves of *Bhurja* (*Betula utilis*) or the pith of *Shimsapa* (*Dalbergia sissoo*).

It was administered to stimulate labour, promote downward movement of *Vata* and the foetus, remove obstruction, and facilitate delivery.

भूर्जपत्रकाचमणिसर्पनिर्मोकैश्चास्या योनिं धूपयेत् ।।<sup>[13]</sup>

*Dhoopana* of *Bhurja*, *Kachamani*, and *Sarpanirmoka* is given to *Yoni* when the placenta is retained after delivery (when it had not been expelled immediately after childbirth).

It was traditionally used to stimulate the genital tract, remove obstruction, promote downward movement of *Apana vayu*, and help expulsion of the retained placenta. It was also believed to cleanse or purify the birth passage.

**2. Ashtanga Hridaya** (4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)

*Aacharya Vagbhatt*, also advises using *Bhurja* in pregnancy as follows.

भूर्जलाङ्गलिकीतुम्बीसर्पत्वक्कुष्ठसर्षपैः ।  
पृथग्द्वाभ्यां समस्तैर्वा योनिलेपनधूपनम् ।।<sup>[14]</sup>

*Lepa* (Paste) or *Dhoopana* with *Bhurjadi Dravyas* separately each, or in combination of two *dravya* or all *dravyas* collectively is done over *Yoni*.

This acts beneficial during *Prasava Sanga* (Obstruction of Labour).

**3. Raj Nighantu** (14<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD)

*Vaidhya Shree Narhari Pandit* in his *Raj Nighantu*, *Prabhadradi Varga*, mentions 12 *Paryaya* (synonyms), properties, *Prayojyanga* and *Matra* of *Bhurja*.

भूर्जो वल्कद्रुमो भूर्जः सुचर्मा भूर्जपत्रकः ।  
चित्रत्वग्बिन्दुपत्रश्च रक्षापत्रो विचित्रकः ।  
भूतघ्नो मृदुपत्रश्च शैलेन्द्रस्थो द्विभूमितः ॥  
भूर्जः कटुकषायोष्णो भूतरक्षाकरः परः ।  
त्रिदोषशमनः पथ्यो दुष्टकौटिल्यनाशनः ।।<sup>[15]</sup>

*Paryaya* are: *Bhurja* (भूर्ज), *Valkadruma*, *Bhurja* (भूर्ज), *Sucharma*, *Bhurjapatraka*, *Chitratwaka*, *Bindupatra*, *Rakshapatra*, *Vichitraka*, *Bhootaghna*, *Mrudupatra*, *Shailendrastho*.

- **Rasa:** *Katu-Kashaya*
- **Virya:** *Ushna*
- **Prabhava:** *Tridoshaghna*, *Bhootagraha badha raksha*, *Dushtata-Kutilata Nashana*.

**4. Kaideva Nighantu** (15<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD).

*Aacharya Shree Vaidhya Kaideva Pandit*, in his *Kaideva Nighantu*, in *Aushadhi Varga*, described *Bhurja* as follows:

भूर्जो भुजो बहुपटो मृदुत्वक् चास्थिरप्रदः ॥  
चित्रपत्रो बहुत्वच्य भूतहा लेख्यपत्रकः ।  
भूर्जः कषायो जयति बलासं पित्तशोणितम् ॥  
मेदो भूतग्रहं रक्षःकर्णरोगविषप्रणुत् ।।<sup>[16]</sup>

*Paryaya:* *Bhurja*, *Bhuja*, *Bahuputa*, *Mrudu-twaka*, *Asthira-prada*, *Chitrapatra*, *Bahu-twaka*, *Bhootaha*, *Lekhya-patraka*

- **Rasa:** *Kashaya*
- **Prabhava:** *Pitta-Shonita Shamaka*, *Medohara*, *Bhootagraha badha raksha*, *Karna roga nashaka*, *Visha nashaka*.

**5. Bhavprakash Nighantu** (16<sup>th</sup> Cent. AD):

*Aacharya Bhavmishra*, in his *Bhavprakash Nighantu*, in *Vatadi Varga*, describes *Bhurja* as follows;

भूर्जपत्रः स्मृतो भूर्जश्चर्मी बहुलवल्कलः ।  
भूर्जो भूतग्रहश्लेष्मकर्णरुक् पित्तरक्त जित् ॥  
कषायो राक्षसघ्नश्च मेदोविषहरः परः ।।<sup>[17]</sup>

*Paryaya:* *Bhurjapatra*, *Bhurja-charma*, *Bahula-valkala*, *Bhurja*.

- **Rasa:** *Kashaya*
- **Prabhava:** *Bhootagraha badha raksha*, *Shleshma Hara*, *Karnaroga nashaka*, *Pitta-Rakta Shamaka*, *Raakshasaghna*, *Medohara*, *Visha nashaka*.

Sr. No.	Classical Texts	Kala	Indication
1	<i>Charak Samhita</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> – 2 <sup>nd</sup> Cent. BC	<i>Prasava vedana</i>
2	<i>Ashtanga Hridaya</i>	4 <sup>th</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> Cent. AD	<i>Prasava Sanga</i>
3	<i>Raj Nighantu</i>	14 <sup>th</sup> Cent. AD	<i>Tridoshaghna, Bhootagraha</i>
4	<i>Kaideva Nighantu</i>	15 <sup>th</sup> Cent. AD	<i>Pitta-Rakta Dosha, Medohara, Karnaroga, Vish roga, Bhootagraha badha</i>
5	<i>Bhavprakash Nighantu</i>	16 <sup>th</sup> Cent. AD	<i>Bhootagraha badha, Shleshma hara, Karnaroga, Pitta-Rakta Shamaka, Raakshasa badha, Medohara, Visha Roga</i>

## DISCUSSION

The *Samhitas* and *Nighantus* referred the *Bhurjapatra* as a medicinal drug with unique properties. Since, among *Brihatrayi* – *Charak Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya* have mentioned about *Bhurjapatra's* medicinal properties in *Sharirasthana*, here *Dhoopana* of *Bhurjapatra* was administered, for *Yoni* related conditions like *Prasava Vedana* and *Prasava Sanga*. This is the concept of *Stri Roga* and *Prasuti Tantra*.

Whereas one of the *Laghutrayi* is *Dravya Aashrita, Bhavprakash Nighantu* and other *dravya aashrita Nighantu* – *Raj Nighantu* and *Kaideva Nighantu*. These *Nighantus* presents synonyms, *guna-karma* and *prabhava*. Some references to *Karnaroga, Vishroga & Medovridhi* – thus indicating broad therapeutic potential. But all among these have stated about *Bhootagraha badha nashana*. Among *Ashtanga Ayurveda*, third is *Grahachikitsa* or *Bhootvidhya*, where *chikitsa* of *Dev, Asur, Purna*, etc. *graha* is mentioned. Where also *Baalgraha* and *Skandagraha* and their cures are also mentioned. Some other references of *Bhootvidhya* are mentioned in *Charak Samhita* as well as *Sushruta Samhita*.<sup>[18][19][20][21]</sup> *Aacharya Sushruta* states – after *Shastrakarma, raksha mantra uccharana* is done for protection of the patient.<sup>[22]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

*Bhurjapatra* (*Betula utilis*) holds an important place in *Ayurvedic* classical literature. Various *Samhitas* and *Nighantus* describe its medicinal uses, especially in obstetric care, ear disorders, metabolic conditions, and protective applications. Literary evidence indicates significant traditional value and therapeutic potential. Further pharmacognostical, phytochemical, and clinical studies are needed to establish evidence-based applications of *Bhurjapatra* in present healthcare practice.

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