

# A Controversial Medicinal Plant *Murva*: A Review

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## ABSTRACT

*Murva* is an important medicinal plant used in Ayurveda for the treatment of number of diseases which includes *Kushta* (psoriasis), *Jwara* (fever), *Pandu* (Anemia), *Prameha* (Diabetes mellitus) and so on. It has been observed that more than one species of plant is used under plant *Murva* which leads to controversy. *Sandigdha Dravya* is a term used for medicinal plants having controversial sources, appear in the *Ayurvedic* classics. The reason for controversy can be listed from one common vernacular name used for two or more different plant species, synonyms and opinion of different authors. Plant based medicines form a very important component of total medicines available for treating various diseases. The increased demand and reduced availability has led to use of different plant species under the name of one plant further arises the problem of controversy. Similarly there is controversy with the drug *Murva*, that creates huge confusion between different plant sources used in different parts of country. In regards to this purpose, the present work aims to review and differentiate the medicinal plants which are known as *Murva*.

**Keywords:** *Murva*, Controversy, *Sandigdha Dravya*, *Ayurveda*

## INTRODUCTION

*Murva* is yet a highly controversial drug. There are many plants which are currently being identified and used as *Murva* in different parts of India. Many times the evidences about plant remains incomplete which gives rise to scope for suspicion and doubt.<sup>1</sup> In general the Reasons for controversy can be enlisted starting from giving a same synonyms/vernacular names to more than one plant, difference of opinion of authors,

Documentation defects in manuscripts, causing confusion in identifying the genuine plant.

Similarly the description of *Murva* which led to controversy can be enlisted under following headings:

- Description in *Samhitha*
- Description in *Nighantu*
- Description by commentators
- Different botanical sources used in the name of *Murva*

TABLE 1 : DESCRIPTION OF MURVA IN SAMHITHA

CHARAKA SAMHITHA	GANNA/ SKANDHA	<i>Triptighna mahakashaya</i> <sup>2</sup> , <i>Sthanyashodana mahakashaya</i> <sup>3</sup> , <i>Tiktakandha</i> <sup>4</sup>
	PANCHAKARMA	<i>Moola</i> (root) of the plant is used in <i>Vamana</i>
	DISEASES	<i>Pittaja roga</i> , <i>Jwara</i> , <i>Kushta</i> , <i>Pandu</i> , <i>Grahani</i> , <i>Swasa</i> , <i>Kasa</i> , <i>Chardi</i>
SUSHRUTHA SAMHITHA	GANNA	<i>Aragwadadhi gana</i> <sup>5</sup> , <i>Pittasamshamana varga</i> <sup>6</sup> , <i>Patoladi gana</i> <sup>7</sup>
		Along with <i>Seevya</i> drugs like <i>Ashmantaka</i> , <i>Atasi</i> , <i>Guduchi</i> it is explained. Used in <i>Vranaseevana</i> ( according to this the Sutra of <i>Murva</i> will be strong, hence it is used in <i>Tanttu roopa</i> )
	DISEASES	<i>Jwara</i> , <i>Kamala</i> , <i>Kushta</i> , <i>Pandu</i>
ASTANGA HRIDAYA	GANNA	<i>Tiktavarga</i> <sup>8</sup> , <i>Vatsakadi varga</i> <sup>9</sup> , <i>Vamana dravya</i> <sup>10</sup>
	DISEASES	<i>Pittaatisara</i> , <i>Pandu</i> , <i>Stanya roga</i>

Therefore from above descriptions it is clear that it possesses *Tikta rasa* and is used in *pittaja Roga*.

**TABLE 2 : DESCRIPTION IN NIGHANTU**

PARYAYA RATNAMALA <sup>11</sup>	Described it has <i>latha</i> (climber) with <i>Tikta rasa</i> . It was not controversial drug then. Synonym – <i>Tiktavalli</i>
DHANWANTARI NIGHANTU <sup>12</sup>	Controversy of drug <i>Murva</i> started from this period. Has mentioned all synonyms of <i>Paryaya ratnamala</i> except <i>Tiktavalli</i> . Instead he added <i>Triparni</i> , <i>Swadhurasa</i>
ASTANGA NIGHANTU <sup>13</sup>	Has mentioned the drug in <i>Patoladi gana</i> with other <i>Tikta Rasa Dravya</i>
INDU NIGHANTU <sup>13</sup>	Synonyms – <i>Snigdha chadda</i> , <i>Peeluparni</i>
SHODALA'S GUNASANGRAHA <sup>14</sup>	Has mentioned in <i>Guduchyadi varga</i> along with other <i>Tikta Rasa Dravya</i>
MADANAPALA NIGHANTU <sup>15</sup>	Doesn't mention about <i>Tiktarsa</i> , instead he mention it has <i>Madhura Rasa Dravya</i> adding to this he has given synonyms like <i>Madhurarsa</i> , <i>Madhursava</i> .
RAJA NIGHANTU <sup>16</sup>	He mentions Synonyms of <i>Dhanwantari Nighantu</i> . Drug possess <i>Tikta Rasa</i> and used in <i>Prameha</i>
KAIYYADEVA NIGHANTU <sup>17</sup>	Mentions same synonym like other <i>Nighantu</i> . He adds <i>Madhura Rasa</i> to <i>Tikta rasa</i> and <i>Madhura Vipaka</i>
BHAVAPRAKASHA NIGHANTU <sup>18</sup>	Even he gives the same opinion of <i>Kaiyyadeva Nighantu</i> regarding <i>Rasa</i> and <i>Vipaka</i> i.e <i>Tikta</i> , <i>Madhura Rasa</i> and <i>Madhura Vipaka</i>

**TABLE 3 : DESCRIPTION BY COMMENTATORS<sup>19</sup>**

CHARAKA SAMHITHA	JEJJATA	Named it has <i>Chorasnayu</i> . Few mentioned it has <i>Peeluparni</i> He mentions two types <i>Snidgapatra- Murva</i> <i>Dhusarapatra</i>  Therefore <i>Murva</i> is considered as <i>Chorasnayu</i> according to <i>Jejjata</i> and few mentioned it has <i>Peeluparni</i>
CHIKITSA KALIKA	CHANDRAHATTA	Also considered <i>Murva</i> has <i>Chorasnayu</i>
SUSHRUTHA SAMHITHA	DALHANA	Mentions by name * <i>Chorasnayu</i> * <i>Dhanurguna upayogya</i> From these names it is understood that it is very strong ( bow is manufactured out of this, it will be very strong) <i>Murvasutra</i> is used for <i>Vranasevanartha</i> in <i>Shalyakriya</i> In another context, *He explains it has <i>Kshiri Vanaspathi</i> * <i>Kovidara Sadrusha Yugma Patra</i> * <i>Kadali Sadrusha Swalpa Vitapa</i>
ASTANGA HRIDAYA	ARUNADATTA	* <i>Peeluparni</i> * <i>Madhurasa</i>
	HEMADRI	* <i>Madhurasa</i>
	CHAKRADATTA	* <i>Madhurasa</i> , <i>Chorasnayu</i>
	ADAMALLA	* <i>Chorasnayu</i>

**TABLE 4 : DIFFERENT SOURCE PLANTS OF MURVA**

SOURCE	MORPHOLOGY	PART USED
<i>Marsdenia tenacissima</i> <sup>20</sup> Asclepiadaceae	Perennial climber with grey bark having milky exudate. Leaves – broadly ovate, acuminate, deeply cordate at the base. Surface – Young – tomentose Old – glabrous Flowers – Greenish yellow, corymbose cymes. Fruit- Follicle	Root
<i>Wattakaka volubilis</i> <sup>21</sup> Asclepiadaceae	Tall woody climber, with densely lenticellate and pustular branches Leaves – opposite, broadly ovate or suborbicular. Acuminate. Flowers – Bright yellowish green Fruit – Follicle	Root, Leaves
<i>Clematis gouriana</i> <sup>22</sup> Ranunculaceae	Climber, usually glabrous except the young parts, stems grooved brown. Leaves – pinnate, bipinnate or tripinnate. Leaflets- ovate or oblong, acuminate, entire or coarsely toothed. Surface – Upper surface – shining Flowers – Yellowish or greenish white Fruit – achenes ovoid	Root, Leaves
<i>Maerua arenaria</i> <sup>23</sup> Capparaceae	A climbing shrub with divaricate branches, bark smooth and pale. Leaves – Elliptic- oblong, mucronate, glabrous. Flowers- corymbs, greenish white Fruit – Pale brown constricted between seeds	Root, Leaves
<i>Helicteres isora</i> <sup>24</sup> Sterculiaceae	A shrub or small tree, young shoot clothed with stellate hairs. Leaves – bifarious, oblong, closely dotted on both surfaces with stellate hairs, crenate – serrate Flowers – somewhat 2 lipped, petals red	Root, stem bark. Fruit

	Fruit – follicles	
<i>Bauhinia vahlii</i> <sup>25</sup> Caesalpinaceae	An immense climber with widespreading stem. Bark somewhat rough, dark reddish brown. Leaves – deeply cordate, glabrous above, densely tomentose beneath Flowers – White , peduncled corymbose terminal densely tomentose Fruits – Pod, flat	Seed, Leaves, stem bark
<i>Sansevieria roxburghiana</i> <sup>26</sup> Agavaceae	Stem less with a creeping rootstock evergreen perennial plant, producing succulent erect, rigid leaves. Leaves – Flat, narrowly lanceolate, leaf surface is smooth, slightly rough Flowers – Clusters of four	Roots
<i>Chenomorpha macrophylla</i> <sup>27</sup> Apocyanaceae	Stout spreading lactiferous shrub with soft greyish bark which yields fibre of good quality. Leaves – simple, opposite, tomentose beneath Flowers – Large, whitish to cream yellow Fruits – Long, straight, woody parallel	Roots

## DISCUSSION

Descriptions in classics explain about rasa and treatment modalities. It is said that *Valkasutra* (fibre from bark) of *Murva* is strong and it is used in *Vranaseevana*. It possesses *Tikta Rasa*, used in *Pittaja Roga*.

Based on descriptions of *Nighantu* it is a *Latha Roopa Vanaspathi* (climber) which possess *Tikta rasa* based on synonym like *Tiktavalli*. Also other synonyms like *Triparni*, *Peeluparni* mentioned led to controversy. Few *Nighantu* gave synonym like *Madhurarasa* which gives a hint of *Madhura Rasa*. Therefore from descriptions it can be concluded the drug possess *Tikta*, *Madhura Rasa* and *Madhura Vipaka*.

Descriptions in commentary by different authors mentioned above gives many names which is an hint to explain the morphology of the drug i.e.

- *Chorasnayu*, *Dhanurguna Upayogi* suggests the strength of the fibre of bark
- *Kovidara Sadhrusha Yugmapatra* suggests it is similar to plant *Kovidara* which has emarginated leaf
- *Dudhau Ithi Loke* suggests that it exudates milky latex

Based on description of different

- *Clematis gouriana* has tripinnate leaves hence can be related to *Triparni*
- *Sansevieria roxburghiana* has narrowly lanceolate leaves i.e pointed at apex can be related to *Suchimukhi Murva*
- *Maerua arenaria* is a climbing shrub, leaves are similar to *Peelu* hence can be related to *Gulmavath Latha*(climber) and leaves has *Peeluparni*

- *Marsdenia tenacissima* is climber with milky exudate and stem fibres are said to be strong with laxative action of roots, hence can be related to *Dhanurguna Upayogi* and *Kshirivanspathi*
- *Chenomorpha macrophylla* Stout spreading lactiferous shrub with soft greyish bark which yields fibre of good quality, can be related to *Dhanurguna Upayogi* and *Kshirivanspathi*
- *Bauhinia vahlii* has emarginated leaves similar to description of *Kovidara Sadrusha Yugmapatra*  
*Marsdenia tenacissima* & *Chenomorpha macrophylla* are climber/shrub (*Gulmavath Latha*) with milky exudate( *Kshiri Vanaspathi*) and possess strong fibres (*Dhanurguna Upayogi*). With the description of morphology, *Rasapanchaka* in classics and present botanical description it can be considered that *Marsdenia tenacissima* as *Murva* and *Chenomorpha macrophylla* as Substitute (*Pratinidhi*).

## CONCLUSION

We must emphasize the need for an objective research on the plants mentioned in the *Ayurvedic* classical literature to link their description to the correct botanical sources applying the principles of *Namajnana*, *Roopajnana*, *Yuktijnana* etc. Therefore proper identification and standardization should be done to solve the controversy, so that physicians can be able to use source plants without any uncertainty on its therapeutic efficacy.

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