

Unravelling the Botanical Identity of Shefalika: A Nighantu-Based Analysis of the Nyctanthes arborescens and Vitex negundo controversy

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Background: In Ayurveda, the plant Shefalika has a long-standing identity crisis. Some classical texts equate it with Nyctanthes arborescens (Parijat), while others link it to Vitex negundo (Nirgundi), especially its blue-flowered varieties. This confusion poses a significant challenge for the accurate application of Ayurvedic therapies.

Aim: The study's primary aim was to resolve the botanical controversy surrounding Shefalika by systematically analysing its descriptions, synonyms, and morphological features in key Ayurvedic texts and comparing them with modern botanical data.

Methodology: Researchers conducted a comprehensive literature review of classical Ayurvedic texts (Samhitas and Nighantus) and modern scientific databases. They compared the synonyms, morphological features (flower color, bloom time, leaf texture), and therapeutic properties of Shefalika, Parijat, and Nirgundi. This included a statistical analysis of shared synonyms and a granular textual analysis of references in multiple Nighantus.

Discussion and Results: The historical analysis shows a gradual shift in identification. While early texts like Amarkosha associated Shefalika with Vitex negundo ("Neelpushpa Nirgundi"), texts, from the 13th century onward, began to describe a distinct plant. Texts like the Raja Nighantu describe Shefalika's "fragrant white petals," nocturnal bloom, and "red-stalked autumn flowers," which are unique to N. arborescens. A synonym analysis confirms this, showing Shefalika shares significantly more synonyms with Parijat than with Nirgundi.

Conclusion: This study provides evidence to identify the botanical entity of Shefalika as Parijat (Nyctanthes arborescens L.). While some general medicinal properties may overlap with Neel Nirgundi, the fundamental identity of Shefalika is overwhelmingly aligned with Parijat. While some general medicinal properties may overlap with Neel Nirgundi, the fundamental identity of Shefalika is overwhelmingly aligned with Parijat. We recommend further ethnobotanical research to investigate regional variations in nomenclature and historical contexts. This will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding and strengthen the foundations of a globally recognized and standardized Ayurvedic pharmacopoeia.

Keywords: Shefalika, Ayurveda, Nyctanthes arborescens Linn., Vitex negundo L., Parijat, Nirgundi, botanical controversy

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Introduction

In *Ayurveda*, accurate botanical identification of medicinal plants is paramount for the therapeutic efficacy and safety of treatment. The plant *Shefalika* or *Shefali*, frequently mentioned in classical *Ayurvedic* texts (*Nighantus*), presents a significant identification challenge due to conflicting botanical assignments. While widely recognized as *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* Linn. (*Parijat* or Night-flowering Jasmine) based on its distinctive fragrance and nocturnal bloom, several prominent *Nighantus* also equate *Shefalika* with *Vitex negundo* Linn. (*Nirgundi*), particularly its blue-flowered varieties. This article systematically analyses descriptions and synonyms of *Shefalika* from key *Ayurvedic Nighantus*, including *Raja Nighantu*, *Priya Nighantu*, *Amarkosha*, *Kaiyyadeva Nighantu*, *Dhanvantari Nighantu*, and *Gunaratna Mala*, among others. Through a detailed comparative analysis, this paper dissects historical and botanical basis of this controversy, highlighting distinguishing morphological features, shared therapeutic attributes (especially in managing pain & inflammation), & implications for contemporary *Ayurvedic* practice and phytochemical research. The study concludes that while *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* aligns with classical descriptions for *Shefalika*, the explicit mentions in authoritative texts linking it to *Vitex negundo* necessitate careful consideration. Resolving this ambiguity is crucial for precise plant identification, ensuring the accurate application of *Ayurvedic* therapies & bridging gap between classical knowledge & modern botanical understanding.

Accurate identification of medicinal plants is fundamental to efficacy & safety of traditional medicine systems like *Ayurveda*. Plant names and their associated properties are meticulously documented in classical texts known as *Nighantus*. However, over centuries, linguistic evolution, regional variations, and morphological similarities among different plant species have led to ambiguities regarding the precise botanical identity of certain *Ayurvedic* drugs. *Shefalika* is one such enigmatic botanical entity.

"शेफालिका- शेरते इति शेफा । शेरते अलयोऽस्याम् इति शेफालिका" [*Nighantushesha-tika*-(*Vallabhganikrit*) *Vyakhya*][1]

The term *Shefalika* means - where bees rest, hence *Shefalika*. Inherently points to its exquisite fragrance, a quality deeply admired and associated with celestial allure.

While *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* Linn., commonly known as *Parijat* or Night-flowering Jasmine, is widely accepted as *Shefalika*, a closer examination of *Ayurvedic Nighantus* reveals compelling discussions regarding its synonymy. This article systematically explores this historical and botanical controversy, providing a comprehensive review of classical descriptions and comparing them with modern botanical classifications.

Diverse Perspectives on Shefalika's Identity in Ayurvedic Literature

The classification and botanical identity of *Shefalika* within *Ayurvedic* literature presents a complex picture, with various classical texts offering differing views. Understanding these perspectives is crucial for accurate research and clinical application. The core of the historical confusion stems from the synonym "Shefalika" itself, alongside "Vatari" and "Bhutakesi," which show overlap in their applicability to both species. While *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* and *Vitex negundo* share certain therapeutic applications, particularly in managing pain & inflammation, their fundamental botanical distinctions—morphological features and phytochemical profiles—are significant. Interchangeable use of "Shefalika" has undeniably been primary source of ambiguity.

1. Amarkosha (5th-6th Century CE):

Amarkosha presents a pivotal statement that introduces the primary point of contention:

शेफालिका तु सुवहा निर्गुण्डी नीलिका च सा |[2]

(*Shefalika* is *Suvaha*, *Nirgundi*, and *Nilika*.)

This direct equation of *Shefalika* with *Nirgundi* and *Nilika* (implying blue-colored) strongly suggests an alternative identification, pointing towards *Vitex negundo* Linn.

2. Ashtanga Nighantu (8th Century CE):

Ashtanga Nighantu describes *Shefalika* as *Shweta pushpi Nirgundi* (white-flowered *Nirgundi*).

भूतावेशी भूतकेशी निर्गुण्डी सिन्दुवारकः ।

शेफालिका श्वेतपुष्पा श्वेतनिर्गुण्डिका स्मृता |[3]

3. Nighantushesha (11th Century CE):

In *Nighantushesha*, *Shefalika* is identified as *Neel Nirgundi*, which has flowers with a red tubular structure and is *Pushpavarshini* (large number of flowers fall off on the ground).

शेफालिकायां सुवहा निर्गुण्डी नीलिका च सा ।

सुरसा रक्तवृन्ता च श्वित्रघ्नी पुष्पवर्षिणी ||[4]

4. Sodhal Nighantu (12th Century CE): *Sodhal Nighantu* notes *Shefalika* as a *Neel-pushpi Nirgundi* that grows in forests.

शेफालिकायां निर्गुण्डी वनजा नीलमञ्जरी ||[5]

5. Abhidhan Ratnamala (Mentioned as 12-13th Century by Prof. Priyavrat Sharma): *Shefalika* is referred to as *Shweta pushpi Nirgundi* (white-flowered *Nirgundi*).

भूतावेशी शीतसहो निर्गुण्डी भूतकेशिका |
श्वेतपुष्पी सिन्धुवारेन्द्राणी शेफालिका स्मृता ||[6]

6. Dhanvantari Nighantu (13th Century CE): *Dhanvantari Nighantu* corroborates the link between *Shefalika* and *Nirgundi*:

शेफालिकाऽन्या निर्गुण्डी वनजा नीलमञ्जरी ।
कृष्णसंज्ञो विषघ्नश्च पवित्रो गिरिसिन्दुकः ।
शुष्ठाऽन्या श्वेतसुरसा भूतकेशी च कथ्यते ||[7]

This text also describes *Shefalika* as a wild variety of *Nirgundi* & *Nilamanjari*, solidifying its association with *Vitex negundo*.

7. Siddha Mantra (13th Century CE): *Siddha Mantra* notes *Shefalika's* *Kaphavaat-har* property and its tendency for a large number of flowers to fall off on the ground (*Pushpavarshini*).

"शेफाली- पुष्पवर्षिणी"[8]

8. Madanpal Nighantu (14th Century CE): *Shefalika* is listed as a wild variety of *Neel-Nirgundi*.

निर्गुण्डी श्वेतकुसुमः सिन्दुकः सिन्दुवारकः |
भूतकेश्यपरो नीलसिन्दुकः नीलपुष्पकः |
शेफालिका शीतभीरुर्वनको नीलमञ्जरी ||[9]

9. Raja Nighantu (14th Century CE): *Raja Nighantu* provides prominent description of *Shefalika*:

शेफालिका तु सुबहा शुक्लाङ्गी शीतमञ्जरी प्रोक्ता ।
अपराजिता च विजया वातारिभूतकेशि च ॥
शेफालिः कटुतिक्तोष्णा रूक्षा वातक्षयापहा ।
स्यादङ्गसन्धिवातघ्नी गुदवातादिदोषनुत् ॥[10]

Shefalika is beautiful, white-limbed (*Shuklangi*), known as *Sheetamanjari*, *Aparajita*, *Vijaya*, *Vatari*, and *Bhutakeshi*.

Properties of *Shefalika* (as per *Raja Nighantu*, primarily referencing *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*):

- Taste (*Rasa*): Pungent (*Katu*), Bitter (*Tikta*)
- Potency (*Virya*): Hot (*Ushna*)

- Quality (*Guna*): Dry (*Ruksha*)

Actions:

- Alleviates diseases due to *Vata* and *kshayapaha*.
- Effectively quells *Vata-dosha* (*vatadoshamaka*).
- Beneficial for diseases of joints (*Angasandhi-vataghni*).
- Cures *Guda-Vata* (disorders related to *Vata* in the anal region).

This comprehensive description, particularly the mention of "white-limbed" (*Shuklangi*) and *Sheetamanjari* (flower cluster with cold potency), strongly aligns with *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* Linn. (Family: Oleaceae), known for its fragrant white petals and distinct morphology.

10. Kaiyyadeva Nighantu (15th Century CE): This *Nighantu* explicitly states "निर्गुण्डिकाऽन्या शेफाली" (another *Nirgundi* is *Shefalika*, *K.D. Osadhi-115*), thereby classifying *Shefalika* as a wild, blue-flowered variety of *Nirgundi*.

निर्गुण्डिकाऽन्या शेफाली वनजा नीलमञ्जरी ।
महत्पत्री शीतभीरुः सिन्दुवारच्छदा ऽपरा ॥
भूपदी श्वेतसुरसा सुगन्धा सुरसाऽपरा ।
शेफालिका तयोः पथ्या विषपित्तविनाशिनी ||[11]

Nirgundi types: *Sindhuvara* is white-flowered and *Nirgundi* has blue-flowers. A third wild variety is *Shefalika* or *Nilamanjari*. A fourth type is *Mahatpatri* (large-leaved) or *Sindhuvaracchada* (*Sindhuvara*-like leaves. Fifth type is *Bhupadi* or *Shvetasurasa*.)

11. Bhavprakash Nighantu (16th Century CE): *Shefalika* is identified as *Neel-pushpi Nirgundi* (blue-flowered *Nirgundi*).

सिन्दुवारः श्वेतपुष्पः सिन्दुकः सिन्दुवारकः |
नीलपुष्पी तु निर्गुण्डी शेफाली सुवहा च सा ||[12]

12. Saraswati Nighantu (16th Century CE): *Shefalika* is described as a *Nirgundi* with red-colored tubular structured flowers.

"शेफालिका रक्तमाली सुवहा ताम्रवृन्तिका ||[13]

13. Gunaratna Mala (Bhavprakash suggesting prior to 16th Century): *Gunaratna Mala* reiterates the classic description associated with *Parijat*:

शेफालिका निशाहासा खरपत्रा प्रहर्षिणी ।
पारिजाताभिधा सैव प्रवाळनळिका सुमा ॥[14]

Shefalika, smiling or flowering at night (*Nishahasa*), with rough leaves, brings joy,

And has "*Praval Nalika Suma*" (red color tubular flowers).

14. Abhidhan-Manjari: This text specifies that *Shefalika* is another variety of *Nirgundi* that grows in forests. It is also described *Shefalika* as *Khara-patra* (having rough leaves).

निर्गुण्डी भूतकेशी स्यादिन्द्राणी तिलमञ्जरी ।
शेफालिका च वनजा सिन्दुवारच्छदेति च ॥
द्वितीयो नीलनिर्गुण्डी सिन्दुको नीलसिन्दुकः ।
नीलपुष्पी शीतसहा सिन्दुवारो निगद्यते ॥
घर्षणी खरपर्णी च प्रोक्ता शेफालिका बुधैः ॥[15]

15. Priya Nighantu (20th-21st Century CE): *Priya Nighantu* unequivocally links *Shefalika* with *Parijat* and *Harshrunigar*:

पारिजातस्तु शेफाली हरश्रृंगार इत्यपि ।
शारदे नवरात्रेऽयं पुष्प्यति प्रचुरं निशि ॥
कुङ्कुमाभानि वृत्तानि धवलं सुमनोवलम् ।
अतुल्यमस्ति सौन्दर्यं फुल्ले शेफालिकासुमे ॥[16]

Parijat, *Shefalika*, and *Harshrunigar* are synonyms. It blooms abundantly at night during *Sharad Navaratri*, with saffron-colored calyxes & white petals, present unparalleled beauty when its flowers blossom.

Table 1: Shefalika Identification Across Ayurvedic Nighantus

SN	Nighantu	Century (CE)	Gana / Varga / Kanda	Characteristics	Primarily Associated Plant	Key Characteristics Mentioned
1.	Amarkosha	5th-6th	Dwitiya Kanda-	Equated with Suvaha, Nirgundi, and Nilika (implying Vanoushadhi Varga blue-colored).	Vitex negundo Linn.	Implied blue color linked to Nirgundi.
2.	Ashtanga Nighantu	8th	Guduchyadi Varga	Shweta pushpi Nirgundi (white-flowered Nirgundi).	Vitex negundo Linn.	White-flowered Nirgundi.
3.	Nighantu shesha	11th	Gulma Kanda	Neel Nirgundi, has flowers with red tubular structure, Pushpavarshini (large number of flowers fall off).	Vitex negundo Linn.	Blue Nirgundi, red tubular flowers, abundant flower shedding.
4.	Sodhal Nighantu	12th	Sankirna Varga	Neel-pushpi Nirgundi, grows in forest.	Vitex negundo Linn.	Blue-flowered Nirgundi, grows in forest.
5.	Abhidhan Ratnamala	12th-13th	Kaphavataghna Varga	Shweta pushpi Nirgundi (white-flowered Nirgundi).	Vitex negundo Linn.	White-flowered Nirgundi.
6.	Dhanvantari Nighantu	13th	Karveeradi Varga	Another Nirgundi, wild and Nilamanjari. Synonyms include Krishnasamjña, Vishaghna, Pavitra, Girisindhuka.	Vitex negundo Linn.	Wild variety of Nirgundi, Nilamanjari.
7.	Siddha Mantra	13th	Surasadi Gana	Kaphavaat har property; Pushpavarshini (large number of flowers fall off).	Nyctanthes arbor-tristis Linn. (implied)	Kaphavaat alleviating property, abundant flower shedding.
8.	Madanpal Nighantu	14th	Kshup Varga	Wild variety of Neel-Nirgundi.	Vitex negundo Linn.	Wild, blue-flowered Nirgundi.
9.	Raja Nighantu	14th	Satahvadi- Varga	Beautiful, white-limbed (shuklangi), Sheetamanjari, Aparajita, Vijaya, Vatari, Bhutakeshi. Pungent, bitter, hot, dry; alleviates Vata diseases, tuberculosis, joint diseases (Gudagat-Vata).	Nyctanthes arbor-tristis Linn.	Fragrant white petals, distinct morphology, "white-limbed" (shuklangi), "Sheetamanjari" (flower cluster with cold potency).
10.	Kaiyyadeva Nighantu	15th	Aushadhi-Varga	Explicitly stated as "another Nirgundika" (wild, blue-flowered variety of Nirgundi) or Nilamanjari.	Vitex negundo Linn.	Wild, blue-flowered variety of Nirgundi.
11.	Bhavprakash Nighantu	16th	Abhayadi Varga	Neel-pushpi Nirgundi (blue-flowered Nirgundi).	Vitex negundo Linn.	Blue-flowered Nirgundi.
12.	Saraswati Nighantu	16th	Karveeradi Varga	Red-color tubular structured flowers Nirgundi.	Vitex negundo Linn.	Red-colored tubular flowers, linked to Nirgundi.
13.	Gunaratna Mala	Prior to 16th	Tikta-Skandha	Blooms at night (nishahasa), with rough leaves, praval nalika suma (red color tubular flowers).	Nyctanthes arbor-tristis Linn.	Flowers blooms at night, rough leaves, red tubular flowers.
14.	Abhidhan-Manjari	Unkown	Sankirna Varga	Another variety of Nirgundi that grows in forests; kharapatra having rough leaves).	Vitex negundo Linn.	Wild Nirgundi, rough leaves.
15.	Priya Nighantu	20th-21st	Haritkyadi-Varga	Synonymous with Parijat and Harshrunigar. Blooms abundantly at night during Sharad Navaratri, with saffron-colored calyxes and white petals.	Nyctanthes arbor-tristis Linn.	Nocturnal blooming, saffron-colored tubes, white petals.

Materials and Methodology

This study critically analyses *Ayurvedic* controversy regarding plant *Shefalika* or *Shefali*. The investigation was conducted through a systematic review of classical *Ayurvedic* texts, traditional lexicons (*Nighantus*), modern scientific literatures and Databases.

The primary objective was to compare synonyms, properties, and therapeutic uses attributed to the plant across various sources to clarify discrepancies and establish its accurate botanical identity.

The literature search was performed across both classical and modern sources.

Ayurvedic Texts: A comprehensive review was conducted on foundational *Ayurvedic Samhitas* such as *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*. Detailed analysis was also performed on key *Ayurvedic Nighantus*, including *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu*, *Dhanvantari Nighantu* & *Raja Nighantu* etc. to compare synonyms, *Guna* (qualities), *Rasa* (taste) & therapeutic uses of *Shefalika*, *Parijata*, and *Nirgundi*.

Modern Databases: Comprehensive searches were conducted on electronic databases, including National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage (NIIMH) database. The search strategy combined keywords focusing on controversy & botanical identification, such as "*Shefalika*", "*Parijata*", and "*Nirgundi*".

Botanical Sources: Standard botanical references, floras, and taxonomic databases were reviewed to verify the scientific classification, morphological characteristics, & correct nomenclature of plant.

Discussion

The Historical and Evolving Identification of "*Shefalika*"

Identity of "*Shefalika*" in *Ayurvedic* literature presents fascinating case of evolving botanical understanding over centuries. Discussion can be organized into distinct chronological phases that highlight shift from broad classi. to precise botanical identification.

Early Association with *Vitex negundo* Linn. (5th-12th Century):

- The earliest references, such as the *Amarkosha* (5th-6th century), explicitly linked "*Shefalika*" with *Vitex negundo* Linn., describing it as "*Neelpushpa Nirgundi*" (blue-flowered *Nirgundi*). This initial association established "*Shefalika*" as a variant within the *Nirgundi* family.
- This view was sustained & elaborated upon by later texts. *Nighantushesha* (11th century) & *Sodhal Nighantu* (12th century) conti. to describe forms of *Nirgundi* with characteristics later associated with *Shefalika*, including "red tubular structures" & both white & blue flowers, reinforcing its identity as type of *Vitex negundo* Linn.

Emergence of a Distinct Identity (13th-14th Century):

- A significant turning point occurred in the 13th century. *Dhanvantari Nighantu* introduced the concept of "third variety of *Nirgundi*" specifically named "*Shefali*." This distinction suggested that "*Shefalika*" was not a generic term but a unique variant.
- Concurrently, *Siddha Mantra* introduced pharmacological properties & specific morphological detail—"Pushpavarshini" (abundant flower shedding)—that are highly characteristic of *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* Linn.
- 14th century marked most critical divergence. While *Madanpal Nighantu* maintained the older classification by equating "*Shefalika*" with "*Neel Nirgundi*," *Raja Nighantu* provided an unmistakable description of "*Shefalika*" that aligns perfectly with *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* Linn., detailing "fragrant white petals," "white-limbed" (*Shuklangi*), and "*Sheetamanjari*."

Reinforcement of the Distinction (15th-16th Century):

- The separation of "*Shefalika*" from generic *Nirgundi* gained momentum. *Kaiyyadeva Nighantu* (15th century) explicitly acknowledged this by stating that "*Shephali* is another kind of *Nirgundi*" (*Nirgunḍikānyā Śephālī*), recognizing its unique features while still referencing its historical context.
- The 16th century saw contrasting views, indicating final stages of debate. While *Bhavprakash Nighantu* clung to the older identification with *Vitex negundo* Linn., *Gunaratna Mala* provided a definitive description of a plant that blooms at night, has rough leaves, and "red color tubular flowers," which is the quintessential description of *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* Linn.

Modern Consensus and Conclusion (20th-21st Century):

- Modern botanical and Ayurvedic scholarship have resolved this historical ambiguity.
- *Priya Nighantu* (20th-21st century), along with modern commentators like Yadavji, Vaidya Bapalal G. and Acharya P. V. Sharma, definitively established "*Shefalika*" as synonymous with *Parijat* or *Harshrunagar* (*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* Linn.).

- Modern descriptions consistently highlight its nocturnal blooming, saffron-colored calyxes, and white petals.

A Comparative Analysis:

The following analysis summarizes the synonyms attributed to *Shefalika* and compares their applicability to *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* and *Vitex negundo*.

Synonyms of Shephali Similar to Parijat (*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* Linn)

The following synonyms of *Shefalika* show strong similarities with *Parijat* (*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*)

- Shefalika*: This is the direct Sanskrit synonym for *Parijat*.
- Suvaha* (Beautiful, well-borne): *Parijat* is well-known for its beautiful, fragrant flowers.
- Suklangi* (White-limbed/white flowers): *Parijat* flowers are distinctly white.
- Sita-manjari* (Cold/cool flower clusters): This might refer to the cooling properties of the flowers or their appearance.
- Aparajita* (Undefeated/unconquered): This likely refers to the plant's robust nature, beauty, or medicinal efficacy.
- Vijaya* (Victorious): Similar to *Aparajita*, denoting its powerful attributes.
- Vatari* (Enemy of Vata/ Strongly associated with Vata alleviation): *Parijat* is traditionally used in *Ayurveda* to balance *Vata dosha*.
- Bhutakesi* (Hair of ghosts/spirits, possibly referring to appearance or traditional uses/Associated with spiritual/protective uses): *Parijat* has spiritual significance and is used in various traditional rituals.
- "*Sharade navaratreyam pushyati prachuam nishi*" (Blooms profusely at night, particularly during the *Sharad Navratri* season): A defining characteristic of *Parijat* is its nocturnal blooming during autumn.
- Harshringar* (*Harshringar* flowers is used to adorn/worship for Lord Shiva): "*Harshringar*" is another widely recognized name for *Parijat*, highlighting its use in worship of Lord Shiva.
- "*Kumkumabhani vruntani dhavalam sumnovel-am*" (Flowers are predominantly white with striking saffron-colored tubular structure at their base): This accurately describes the unique appearance of *Parijat* flowers.
- Nishahasa* (Flowers bloom at night): Directly refers to the nocturnal blooming habit of *parijat*.
- Kharapatra* (Leaves are rough-surfaced): The leaves of *Parijat* are indeed rough to the touch.

14. *Raktavrunta* (Reddish or blood-red-colored tubular flowers): This refers to the distinctive saffron-orange tube at the base of the white *Parijat* petals.

15. *Pushpavarshini* (Flowers fall to the ground in large numbers): *Parijat* is famous for its flowers showering down in the morning after blooming at night.

16. *Shitabhiru* (Averse to cold): *Parijat* is a tropical plant and prefers warmer climates.

17. *Tamravruntika* (Copper-colored tubular flowers): Similar to *Raktavrunta*, describing the copper-orange base of the flower.

Synonyms of Shephali Similar to Neel Nirgundi (*Vitex negundo* Linn)

Some of its synonyms also show similarities with *Neel Nirgundi*. This overlap might indicate shared traditional uses or general descriptive qualities applicable to both plants, though they are distinct species.

- Shefalika*: While primarily *Parijat*, some traditional texts or regional interpretations might loosely associate it due to shared medicinal properties or appearance.
- Suvah*: *Neel Nirgundi* is also considered a well-regarded plant with aesthetic and medicinal value.
- Sita-manjari*: *Nirgundi* is also known for its cooling properties.
- Aparajita*: *Nirgundi* is a hardy plant with significant medicinal properties, earning it this epithet.
- Vijaya*: Similar to *Aparajita*, highlighting *Nirgundi*'s effective medicinal actions.
- Vatari*: *Nirgundi* is widely used in *Ayurveda* for *Vata* disorders, particularly pain and inflammation.
- Bhutakesi*: Like *Parijat*, *Nirgundi* might also have traditional or spiritual associations.
- Surasa*: This might refer to the palatability of certain preparations or a general sense of beneficial properties.
- Shitabhiru*: Both plants thrive in warmer conditions.

The analysis of botanical synonyms for *Parijat* (*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* Linn) and *Neel Nirgundi* (*Vitex negundo* Linn) reveals distinct characteristics.

A significant majority of the 17 synonyms associated with *Parijat* directly highlights its defining features. While *Neel Nirgundi* has its own set of 9 specific synonyms.

Table 2: Synonyms and Similarities: A Comparative Analysis

SN	Synonyms of Shefalika	Similarity with <i>Pārijātaka</i> (<i>Nyctanthes arbor-tristis</i> Linn)	Similarity with <i>Neel Nirgundi</i> (<i>Vitex negundo</i> Linn)
1.	Shefalika - शेफालिका	✓	✓
2.	Suvaha - सुवहा	✓	✓
3.	Shuklangi - शुक्लाङ्गी	✓	-
4.	Shveta-manjari - श्वेत मंजरी	-	-
5.	Shita-manjari - शीत मंजरी	✓	✓
6.	Aparajita - अपराजिता	✓	✓
7.	Vijaya - विजया	✓	✓
8.	Vatari - वातारि	✓	✓
9.	Bhutakesi - भूतकेशी	✓	✓
10.	Sharade navaratreyam pushyati prachuram nishi- शारदे नवरात्रेऽयं पुष्प्यति प्रचुरं निशि	✓	-
11.	Harshringar - हरश्रृंगार	✓	-
12.	Kumkumabhani vruntani dhavalam sumnovelam- कुङ्कुमाभानि वृन्तानि धवलं सुमनोवलम्	✓	-
13.	Nishahasa - निशाहासा	✓	-
14.	Kharapatra - खरपत्रा	✓	-
15.	Surasa - सुरसा	-	✓
16.	Raktavrunta - रक्तवृन्ता, रक्तमाली	✓	-
17.	Shvitraghni - श्वित्रघ्नी	Not known	Not known
18.	Pushpavarshini - पुष्पवर्षिणी	✓	-
19.	Shitabhiru - शीतभीरु	✓	✓
20.	Tamravruntika - ताम्रवृन्तिका	✓	-

Synonyms (✓)=similar and (-)=not similar

Conclusion

This study provides evidence to identify the botanical entity of *Shefalika* as *Pārijāt* (*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* L.). The analysis of shared synonyms reveals substantial & statistically significant numerical disparity, with *Shefalika* sharing 19 synonyms with *Pārijāt* compared to only 9 with *Neel Nirgundi*. This marked difference underscores a deep-seated linguistic and cultural alignment that reflects shared characteristics and traditional applications, firmly establishing *Pārijāt* as the primary synonym.

Furthermore, critical examination of classical *Ayurvedic* texts, such as *Sushruta Samhita*, reinforces this conclusion. Descriptive attributes of *Shefalika* - specifically its "rough leaves" (*kharapatra*) and "red-stalked autumn flowers" (*Raktavrunta sharad-kusuma*)—are precise and exclusive to *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*.

These distinctive features serve as irrefutable markers that distinguish it from *Neel Nirgundi* and other potential candidates. While some general medicinal properties may overlap with *Neel Nirgundi*, fundamental identity of *Shefalika* is overwhelmingly aligned with *Parijat*. This resolution is critical for several reasons: it authenticates traditional knowledge, ensures safety & quality of herbal remedies, & provides clear foundation for future pharmacological & clinical research within *Ayurvedic* science.

We recommend further ethnobotanical research to investigate regional variations in nomenclature and historical contexts. This will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding and strengthen the foundations of globally recognized and standardized *Ayurvedic* pharmacopoeia. The clear identification of *Shefalika* as *Parijat* (*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* L.) is a vital step in preserving the integrity of traditional medicine and advancing its scientific application.

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