

A SURVEY ON FOLKLORE SACRED TREES IN TEMPLES OF BHANDARATOWN (M.S), INDIA.

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Abstract : India has majority of Hindu population which is religious to great extent. Not only they worship deities of Gods and Goddesses, they worship trees also. Worshipping of these sacred trees is practiced since many years in India. These trees are worshipped because it has reference in our mythology. The flowers and leaves of the plants are offered as a part of puja and ornamentation of deities. Such plants have medicinal values as well. Therefore this dual benefits gained from such plants have increased their significance. An attempt has therefore being made to identify such plants having medicinal and religious importance as well in Bhandara region located in Eastern Maharashtra

Key-words: Hindu, Medicinal value, Sacred tree, Worship.

Introduction :

The Hindu religion has numerous rituals while worshipping Gods and Goddesses either at home or temples. The offering of Flowers and Leaves from plants is part of these rituals. Therefore trees have occupied a significant role in such an event of performing puja. Trees have an important role in conserving the biodiversity and also has a commercial and medicinal value. Sacred trees/plants are identified in India like Neem, Tulsi, Banyan, Bel, Rudraksha etc. Such trees are also having mention in Mythology where Bel tree is linked with Lord Shiva and Peepal to Lord Vishnu and Mango to Lord Hanuman, to mention a few. Existence of God in Trees is another belief which is strongly engraved in our faith and religion and worshipping of such trees exist since ancient times. The traditional worship practices in India show the symbiotic relation of man with nature. Indigenous communities especially unknowingly conserved its valuable biodiversity. Plants have a unique vital role in human welfare and are continued to be valued for economic, commercial and medicinal resources. On the other hand the sacred trees are protected by the local people due to their cultural and religious beliefs reside in them. In view of this, in present survey the author surveyed all temples in Bhandara and nearby villages and interact with saints, tribals, farmers and senior women and gathered mythological and medicinal information.

Methodology :

Information on the use of sacred medicinal trees was collected through surveys in different residential localities and temples of Bhandara district.. Ethno medicinal

information and sacred values are gathered from saints (Pandits) in temples, tribal people and from senior house wives of residential areas.

Results and Discussion :

The author gathered sacred information of trees in different temples of Bhandara town and enumerated the folklore information from local and nearby tribal people of Bhandara rural areas. A total 14 tree species representing 12 families and 12 genres. Most of these trees are used to cure skin diseases, cough, wounds, fractures, piles, snake bite, diabetes etc. Leaves are the most commonly used plant parts of the present survey followed by roots, seed, fruit and bark. The medicines are prepared in the form of decoction dry powder and paste form from freshly collected plant parts. Medicines are given as inhalation by crushing or oral in the form of pellets and even paste applying and rubbing by massage. The common ailments like stomach ache, piles, jaundice and cough are cured by oral medicines while the skin diseases and wounds can be cured by external application.

In the present work, folklore information is gathered, documented and enumerated for 14 sacred trees from local farmers, tribal and housewives and saints in temples. Some medicinal information was gathered by referring local flora and previous literature (Bhadange & Koche 2012, Gowela et al. 2005, Pankaj et al. 2013, Phukan 2006, Ugemuge 1986 and Zingare 2012,)

Enumeration of Some Folklore Sacred Trees :

1. *Aegle marmelos* (L.) Correa (Local name: Bael) Family: Rutaceae

Medicinal value: The roots act as astringent, bitter and they are useful for treating diarrhoea, dysentery, dyspepsia, expectorant, deafness, diabetes and asthma. Dry leaves and fruits are antibacterial, carminative, anti-inflammatory and for constipation.

Sacred value: Leaves and fruits are used in the worship of Lord Shiva. Very common in Shiv temple.

2. *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss. (Local name: Kadu Nimb) Family: Meliaceae

Medicinal value: Bark cures leprosy, skin diseases, eczema, leukoderma, malarial fever, ulcers, wounds, diabetes, tubercular glands, anorexia, vomiting. The leaves are bitter astringent with anti-inflammation, antiseptic and insecticide properties. Neem oil is used for hair growth.

Sacred value: The tree is held one of the very common sacred tree by the Hindus and used in many religious ceremonies and dried twigs are used in hawan.

3. *Bouhina variegata* L. (Local name: Kanchan) Family: Caesalpinaceae

Medicinal value: The root and bark are useful for pitta and kapha, diarrhea, dysentery, ulcers, inflammations, cough and diabetes, skin diseases, leprosy, intestinal worms, tumors etc.

Sacred value: In Dushhara (Vijaya Dashami), people exchange these leaves as Sona (Gold) is the tradition in North Indians.

4. *Butea monosperma* (Lam.) Taub. (Local name: Palas) Family: Fabaceae

Medicinal value: Bark is used for the treatment of pitta and kapha, anorexia, dyspepsia, diarrhoea, dysentery, haemorrhoids, bone fractures, rectal diseases, gonorrhoea, hepatopathy, ulcer, tumors and diabetes. The leaves have astringent, anti-inflammatory and aphrodisiac properties and are useful in pimples, boils, colic, worm infestations also.

Sacred value: On the occasion of Vastu shanti (i.e. house warming ceremony), flowers are used for making a dye used during Holi and Rang panchmi, Kept twigs in front of their houses in Pola festival.

5. *Ficus benghalensis* L. (Local name: Bat) Family: Moraceae

Medicinal value: whole tree parts are used as astringent, anti-inflammatory. The aerial roots are useful for treating vomiting and leucorrhoea. The bark is useful for controlling burning sensation, diarrhea, dysentery, diabetes, ulcers, skin diseases, gonorrhea. The latex is useful in cracks of the sole and skin diseases.

Sacred values: Hindu mythology says that Brahma was transformed into a Vat tree and it is viewed as the male to the peepal. It is considered as a sin to destroy both the trees especially the male. The dry twigs of the tree are used as Samidhas for producing sacred fire.

6. *Ficus recemosa* L. (Local name: Gular) Family: Moraceae

Medicinal value: Leaves good remedy for control of excessive appetite. external burning skin inflammation, diarrhea, dysentery, leukoderma. The extract of fruit used in diabetes, skin wounds and sprains.

Sacred value: The dry twigs of the tree are used as Samidhas for producing sacred fire.

7. *Ficus religiosa* L. (Local name: Peepal) Family: Moraceae

Medicinal value: The bark is astringent and aphrodisiac, and an aqueous extract of it has an antibacterial activity against *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Escherichia coli*. Leaves and tender shoots have purgative properties and are also recommended for wounds and skin diseases. The latex is good for neuralgia, inflammations and hemorrhages.

Sacred values: The tree is sacred for Hindus, viewed as the female to the Banyan tree (Vata Savithri). The tree is worshipped every month on new moon day.

8. *Gmelina arborea* Roxb. (Local Name: Shivan) Family: Verbenaceae

Medicinal value: Roots cure abdominal pain, burning sensation and flowers used as astringent, dry fruits are used for promoting hair growth, leprosy and constipation.

Sacred value: Farmers grow this tree in their fields and worship on Shivratri day.

9. *Mangifera indica* L. (Local name: Aam) Family: Anacardiaceae

Medicinal value: Astringent, anti-inflammatory, dysentery, wounds and ulcers.

Sacred value: Aam leaf smeared with sindoor is called amerpallav and is kept in a pot called Lakshmi Ghata. This Ghata or pot personifies Lakshmi herself. Branches of mango tree are

also used in Yagna or sacrifice. In every puja at house the mango branches, leaves and Lakshmi Ghata are a must and indicated as auspicious.

10. *Nyctanthus arbor-tristis* L. (Local name: Parijataka) Family: Oleaceae

Medicinal value: Leaves used as antibacterial, cures asthma, chronic fever, grayness of hair, bronchitis.

Sacred value: Hindus believed, Lord Krishna and Radha dance under this tree in Vrindavan performing puja as Kalpavriksh.

11. *Phyllanthus emblica* L. (Local Name- Amla)Family: Euphorbiaceae

Medicinal Value: Powdered fruits of *Phyllanthus emblica*, *Terminalia chebula* and *Terminalia bellirica* are taken in equal proportion (known as 'triphala') with warm water or milk acts a mild laxative. Triphala soaked in water and used for washing eyes.

Sacred values: The Amla tree is worshipped by the tribal women on Amla navmi in the month of Kartik Shukla Navmi and also worshipped as AkshayNavmi.

12. *Plumeria rubra* L. (Local Name: DokChampa) Family: Apocynaceae

Medicinal Value: Wood is used for the treatment of Laxative and taken as vermifuge.

Sacred value: People call it as symbol of Luck. Flowers are strongly perfumed, white with a yellow center used for worshipping Lord Shiva. Very common in Shiva temple.

13. *Prosopis spicigera* (L.) Druce. (Local name: Shami) Family: Mimosaceae

Medicinal value: The leaves are used as astringent and paste is used to treat ulcer, fever and vomiting.

Sacred value: Leaves used for worshipping Lord Shiva. It is beloved that, Pandavas kept their Arms in the burrow of Shami tree during their AgyaatVaas.

14. *Terminalia arjuna* Roxb. (Local name: Arjun) Family: Combretaceae

Medicinal value: Bark is useful in anaemia and leucoderma. Fruits are for digestion, fever, ulcers, vomiting, diarrhea and dysentery. The oil obtained from seeds is used for hair growth.

Sacred value: The leaves and flowers of this tree are offered to the Lord Vishnu and Lord Ganpati on the several religious occasions.

Conclusion :

In conclusion the study has shown that many local tree species of religious importance are used as medicines to treat many health problems which in turn helps in conserving plant species. But, there is need to study drug dosages and duration of treatment for different diseases so that they can be standardized to reduce the risk which they pose when administered to patients. Secondly, there is need to carry out chemical analysis studies for plant parts to see whether they have adequate active ingredients which can be used for treating patients. Plant worship in a way maintains local bio-diversity and plays an

important role in its management and conservation. Women particularly, in both rural and urban areas worship these plants which indirectly helps protecting these plant species.

Acknowledgments: I have immense pleasure in expressing my deep sense of gratitude and gratefulness to our Principal Dr. Vikas Dhomne for encouraging and providing library facility.

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