

Some Sacred Trees and their Medicinal Uses from Amravati District (Maharashtra)

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Abstract: Plant worship is one of the earliest forms of religion in ancient world. Here is a comprehensive account on some of the important trees, which are not only being used in sacrificial rites and rituals but also in medicine. So it can be said every plant used in worship ceremonies, has also medicinal value.

Keywords: Sacred trees, medicinal value, Amravati Dist.

1. Introduction

In India medicinal plants have made a good contribution to the development of ancient Indian Materia Medica. The Charak Samhita (1000 B.C.) records the use of over 340 drugs of Vegetable origin. World Health Organization WHO (2000) has estimated that at least 80% the world's population relies on traditional systems of medicine for their primary health needs.

Plants worship is one of the earliest forms of religion in ancient world. Besides, there is a belief, that the plants, which are sacred or being worshiped have the medicinal potential too. Here is a comprehensive account on some of the important trees, which not only being used in sacrificial rites and rituals but also in medicine, particularly in Amravati District of Maharashtra.

2. Materials and Methods

There is no specific sacred groves in the district some natural plants grow around the temples, churches mosque etc. All the religious institutions were visited e.g. people, priests and aged people of locality were interviewed and outcome of the interview were put in the present project work.

3. Observations

1. *Aegle marmelos* Correa ex Roxb. (bel) Rutaceae

It is generally cultivated near temples and dedicated to Lord Shiva. Tree is also sacred to Parvati & Kalidasa. Fruit decoction in diarrhea and dysentery, diuretic, Leaves – against snake bite, Roots – included in Dashmoola an Ayurvedic preparation.

2. *Anthocephalus chinensis* (Lamk) A. Rich ex Walp. (Kadam) Rubiaceae

The plant favorite of Lord Krishna, remain standing in its shade. Leaves are – in Haritalika Vrat. Fruits are aphrodisiac, refrigerant, juice giving in fever. Leaves are astringent, decoction for gargling, stem bark useful for cough and uterine complaints.

3. *Areca catechu* Linn (Supari) (Arecaceae)

The nuts of this plant are used in many religious ceremonies offered to Lord Vishnu in Satyanarayan Katha. Nut is used against leucoderma, leprosy, cough, worms, anemia, obesity,

4. *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss (Neem) (Meliaceae)

Nectar was being taken to heaven from the world, for the use of gods, a few drops falls on the neem, it is used on New Year's day. Hindus every portion of tree sacred religious (ceremonies, marriage, Shitala the goddess of smallpox). Hindus eat leaves to acquire freedom from diseases, Plants regarded as village Dispensary use all its parts for various ailments.

Fruits antiperiodic astringent seeds (oil) Antiseptic eczema Leprosy Flowers are anti fungal antiseptic.

5. *Betula utilis* D. Don (Bhojapatra) Betulaceae:

All ancient religious books written on birch bark e.g. Kalidas. Bark antiseptic carminative skin disease, hysteria, epilepsy etc.

6. *Butea monosperma* (Lamk). Taub (Palas) Fabaceae (Fig.1)

This tree is sacred to Soma, the moon (Vedas). Leaves are employed in religious ceremonies, Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva. Flowers Yellow dye used in Holi festival. Flowers and leaves are astringent diuretic aphrodisiac, flowers blood purifier. Flower and seeds are mixed decoction used as warmicide, ringworm.

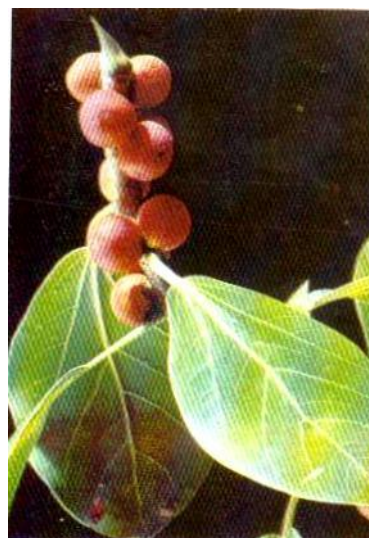


Figure 1: *Butea monosperma*



Figure 2: Ficus benghalensis

7. **Cocos nucifera** Linn (Coconut) Arecaceae
Hindus chiefly employed the fruits offering to the gods. Its Nuts are broken on the opening ceremonies (Mahurat) coconut milk is used to treat fish poisoning Oil is used to rheumatism back pains or ointments. Oil is used as hair oil vermicide properties.
8. **Emblica Officinalis** Gaertn (Amla) (Euphorbiaceae)
In kartik it is worship this tree Amla Fruits are very good source Vitmain C. Fruits used in Triphala (Ayurvedic) piles stomach complaints Amla in the preparation of chayavanprash, Hairdye / Shampoo etc. Picked fruits used in Ayurved.
9. **Ficus bengalensis** L. (Banyan) Moraceae (Fig.2)
It is supposed that Brahma was transformed in to this tree According to mythology, God Vishnu was born under the shade of this tree Tree worship by the tradition that Savitri Satyawana. Tender leaves are eaten by tribals, cattles, goat
Bark is an astringent bark cures dysentery
10. **Ficus racemosa** Linn (Umber) Moraceae
As Sacred tree Barks and figs are used as medicine. Bark ulcers skin disease, gonorrhea. Ripe fruit sweet and used in hemoptysis
11. **Ficus religiosa** L (Peepal) Moraceae
Tree is believed to be sacred by triad Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh Pipal tree looked as a great sin. Hindus are viewing it as the female to the Banyan tree Bark Gonorrhea, Tenderleaves, to cover inflammatory areas of ulcer.
12. **Mangifera indica** Linn (Mango)Anacardiaceae
It is sacred trees, leaves of mango used in religious ceremonies, mandap & marriages. Fruit ripe anti dysenteric, astringent, diuretic, nutritious unripe fruit anti scobutic stomache , beneficial heat apoplexy. Seeds powder asthma diarrhea dysentery
13. **Polyalthia longifolia** Thw (Ashoka) Annonaceae
Plant sacred and met near temples Leaves are strung and hung to doors on Hindu festivals in Maharashtra. Decoction Bark, Febrifuge, cardiac depression lower Blood pressure stimulates respiration.
14. **Santalum album** Linn (Chandan) Santalaceae

Hindus consider sacred since ancient times paste of wood is used for painting the body after bathing emulsion its wood is offering to the gods and wood is burnt before them by the Hindu, Rich people employed for sandalwood for cremating their dead relatives sandalwood and oil are cooling diaphoretic diuretic. Paste of wood application in burns headache, skin diseases.

15. **Terminalia belirica** (Gaertn) Roxb (Behada) Combretaceae

The Hindu consider this plant to be demons Fruit are bitter, astringent, tonic and used in piles , leprosy Oil obtained from fruit hairs and rheumatic

16. **Terminalia chebula** Retz (Hirda) Combretaceae
This plant is sacred, Indra was drinking nectar in honey drops of fluid fellon earth and produced Haritalika plant is physician's favorite. Fruits are rich source of tannin. Fruits are medicines as laxative stomachic tonic. It is used in Triphala which is purgative

17. **Terminalia arjuna** Roxb (Arjun) Combretaceae
Arjuna tree is another from a pandava madyama. The trees respect by Hindus Terminalia mean flowers appearing terminally. Arjuna means white body. The tree yield good quality of timber, Bark is astringent tonic remedy for ulcers. Gum used in medicine. Bark gives relief in hypertension and diuretic

4. Conclusion

The study of sacred and religious plants may give an idea about the extent of concern shown by people about conservation of plants. It may be mentioned here that most of the sacred trees usually have great medicinal value. So it can be said every plant used in worship, ceremonies has also medicinal value. Traditional medicine continues to play an important role in health care. Besides being used medicinally it also provides fodder, fuel, agricultural tools, timber etc.

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