



Plants in mythology of India: Nature conservation ASHOK KUMAR AWASTHI

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The traditional worship practices show the symbiotic relation of human being and nature. Indigenous communities all over the world live in harmony with nature and conserved its valuable biodiversity. The sacred plants of India are actually worshiped throughout the nation owing only to its mythological significance. In India various God and Goddess are worshiped in Hindu religion. Plants flowers and leaves are used during worship for pushpa-puja and patra- puja.

In the words of Lord Buddha – “the forest is the peculiar organism of unlimited kindness and benevolence that make no demand for its sustenance and extend generously to all beings, offering shade to the axe man who destroy it “ India has deep rooted tradition of nature worship, which provide base for the conservation the grass root. Plant has vital role in human welfare and are continue to be valued in industrial, economic, commercial and medicinal resources and sub continent with its wealth and variety of medicinal, many of which are even today common uses much of which is steadily being eroded^{1,2}. This mytho-botanical exploration in biosphere reserve in Bundelkhand region of India, is based on the traditional knowledge of local inhabitants.

Bundelkhand is very important region of India, is unique in many aspect being the central part of the country. Bundelkhand is spread over southern Uttar Pradesh and northern Madhya Pradesh. It comprises thirteen district: Jhansi, Lalitpur, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Mahoba, Banda and Chitrakoot of Uttar Pradesh and Datia, Tikamgarh, Chhatrapur ,Panna,Sagar and Damoh of Madhya Pradesh. Present study deals with sacred value of plants recorded from Bundelkhand region of India. A total number of thirteen sacred genera and thirteen families were enumerated as-

1. *Aegle mermelos* (Family-Rutaceae; local name - Bel): Plant is generally cultivated near to temples, and leaves and fruits are used in the worship of Lord Shiva.
2. *Areca catechu* (Family- Arecaceae; local name- Supari): The nut is used in many religious ceremonies and offered to Lord Vishnu in Satyanarayan Katha.
3. *Azadirachta indica* (Family- Meliaceae; local name- Neem): The tree is held sacred by Hindu and use in various religious ceremonies.
4. *Buta monosperma* (Family-Fabaceae; local name -Palas) This beautiful tree is sacred to Soma (moon). The flowers are offered to Gods. Mention in the Vedas that at the time of Samidhas(Hawan), the dry twigs are used in the ceremonies which goes under the name of nava graham.
5. *Calotropis procera* (Family-Asclepiadaceae; local name- Madar, Aak) Flower is used in the worship of Lord Shiva and Lord Hanuman. The plant is regarded to be the transformation of Surya (sun) as mention in Skand Purana. The leaves are as patri in the worship of Ganapati, Haritalika etc.
6. *Cannabis sativus* (Family-Cannabaceae;local name-Bhang, Ganja) Leaves are offered to Lord Shiva. Plants leaves with milk are used at time of Mahashivaratri festival offered for Lord Shiva by Hindu as well other religion.
7. *Curcuma domestica* (Family-Zingiberaceae;Local name -Haldi). The rubbing of turmeric to the bride is essential for Hindu marriage festival. The rhizome is used in many religious ceremonies of Hindus.
8. *Cynodon dactylon* (Family-Poaceae; local name- Doob) The plant is sacred for Hindus and is offered to Lord Ganesh Who is said to remove all obstacles in life.
9. *Phyllanthus emblica* (Family-Euphorbiaceae; local name- Amla) The plants is worship by women folk on Amla Navmi in the month of Kartic Shukla Navmi and also worshiped as Akshay Navmi to fulfill their desire.

10. *Ficus bengalensis* (Family-Moraceae; local name -Bargad) Hindu mythology says as The Brahma was transform in to a Vat tree and worshiped as Lord Brahma.
11. *Ficus religiosa* (Family-Moraceae; Local name -Peepal) The tree is sacred for Hindu and is believed to be in habitat of the sacred triad – Brahma, Vishnu & Mahesh.
12. *Mangifera indica* (Family- Anacardiaceae; Local name - Aam) The tree is connected with many mythological legends and folklore. The tree is said to be a transformation of Prajapati (Lord of Creature).
13. *Ocimum tenuifolium* (Family-Lamiaceae- local name -Tulsi) Most sacred plant in Hindu religion and offered to Lord Vishnu. It is said that it protect from misfortune sanctifies and guide to heaven all who cultivate it.

Thus India has deep-rooted tradition of nature worship, which provide base for the conservation from the gross-root^{3,4,5}. In Bundelkhand region, plant worship in a way maintains local biodiversity and plays important role in its management and conservation. Women particularly, in both rural and urban areas, have developed faith in the number of plants by protection of plant species. The sacred plants of Bundelkhand are actually worshipped throughout the areas to its mythological significance. Sacred groves homes of mother goddess abound and some types of trees have attained great importance in Hinduism. Their devotion to these plants is so high that they never think to cut these plants. If it happens, so they try to expiation. It is hoped that the present study may be useful to mankind and will inspire to conserve these plant species wherever possible.

References:

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