



ISSN : 0973-7057

Studies on sacred plants in the surrounding of “Jagarnathpur Temple”, Dhurwa, Ranchi- Jharkhand

Kumari Smitha*

Department of Botany, Ranchi University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Received : 12th October, 2017 ; Revised : 16th December, 2017

Abstract : The newly formed state of Jharkhand is extensively dotted with sacred groves. In anthropological study we find description of three sacred groves. These sacred groves are locally known by the name Sarna or Jaherthan. In Jharkhand the size of these Sarna vary from one plant to patches of plants. Literature review suggests that the size of the groves varies from a cluster of a few trees to several hectares of land. According to Gokhle et al (1998) the total area of sacred grooves in India as a whole would be about 83,000 hectares. In Jharkhand these sacred groves are either owned privately or by Temples, churches etc. The sacred groves at the surrounding of Jagarnathpur Temple, Dhurwa, Ranchi plays an important role in the conservation of bio-diversity.

Keywords : Sarna, Jaherthan, Sacred Plants

INTRODUCTION

Nature worship is practised by many communities in different ways in different parts of the world. So they provide protection to patches of plants in and around places of worship. These patches of forests are known as sacred groves.

The newly formed state of Jharkhand is extensively dotted with sacred groves. These groves are protected by local people. These groves are rich in biodiversity and play an important role in the conservation of biodiversity.

Importance of Sacred groves:

In Jharkhand these sacred groves are very important from the points of view of ecology and genetics.

In Jharkhand we observed that these sacred groves are either owned privately or by temples and churches. In these sacred groves rituals and ceremonies are performed.

In the present study, I have undertaken to study the sacred plant in the surrounding of Jagarnathpur temple of Dhurwa, Ranchi. This information on sacred plants would enhance our knowledge as it highlights the link between human group in our society and conservation of plants.

These are some important plant species considered sacred plants in Jagarnath temple's surrounding. These sacred plants are:

*Corresponding author :

Phone : 8434828375

E-mail : premendra.anupam@gmail.com

SL. No	BOTANICAL NAME	FAMILY	COMMON NAME
1	<i>Aegle marmelos (L) Correa</i>	Rutaceae	BAEL
2	<i>Azadirachta indica A.Juss</i>	Meliaceae	NEEM
3	<i>Magnifera indica L.</i>	Anacardiaceae	MANGO
4	<i>Phyllanthus emblica L.</i>	Euphorbiaceae	AMLA
5	<i>Ficus religiosa L.</i>	Moraceae	PIPAL
6	<i>Ocimum americanum L.</i>	Lamiaceae	TULSI
7	<i>Ficus religiosa L.</i>	Moraceae	BARGAD
8	<i>Musa paradisica L.</i>	Musaceae	BANANA
9	<i>Saraca asoca Roxb</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	ASHOK
10	<i>Cynodon dactylon L.</i>	Poaceae	DUB GRASS

1. Aegle marmelos (L) : Common name- Bael is important sacred plants of Jagarnathpur temple. The leaves of the tree are used to worship **Lord Shiva** and without the use of this, the worship is incomplete. The leaves are also used to worship Parvati and Viva Rupra. The use of this plant is seen in Scripture like Vedas and Mahabharata. The plant species act as a climate purifier by absorbing poisonous gas from the atmosphere. The products obtained from Bael are highly nutritive as well as therapeutic.

Medicinal Properties: Bael has enough medicinal value because of the presence of various alkaloids, polysaccharides, and essential oils. And it shows high antioxidant activity. It is used in the anti-cancer activity.

Fruits: The fruit has enough medicinal value.

- The juice of the fruit gives **comfort from constipation** and dyspepsia. The fruits are used against viral and intestinal parasites.
- The fruits are used to prepare squashes and cold drinks. The unripe fruits can be used after roasting.
- It can be used for the treatment of tuberculosis and gynecological disorders.
- It also can be used against the urinary complaint.
- The fruits are also used to increase appetite.
- Because of bitter and pungent taste of the fresh fruit, it can be used to **decrease the blood sugar**.
- The fruit is also used in intestinal disorder. The fruit also can be used in **treatment of diarrhea**,

dysentery, bacillary and irritation in the elementary canal. The juice can be used as brain and heart tonic.



Leaf

- The leaves are used for a diabetic. Buy pure **Bilva leaf powder (BAEL LEAF)**.
- The infusion of leaves can be used against peptic ulcer. Leaves are also **useful for the treatment of Jaundice**, leucorrhea, wounds, deafness, conjunctivitis.
- Raw leaves can be used to cure gastric problems and irritation in the bowel.
- Oil prepared from leaves is proved to stop insect infestation.

- The leaves are also used in pediatric disorder. Extract from leaves is used in the anti-fungal activity.
- The leaf juice with honey is used during fever and cold.



Flowers:

- Tonic prepared from flowers can be used in epilepsy.
- The extract also can be used for the treatment of dysentery and diabetics.



Fruit Pulp: Because of the detergent action of the fruit pulp, it can be used to wash clothes. Marmelosin present in the pulp cures cardiac depressant.

Roots: Methanol content of the root is used in anti- micro filarial activity.

Stem: Stem Yields gums.

Dried fruit: Dried fruit without pulp can be used as pill boxes for storage. Buy **Himalaya Bael Tablets**.

Bark: The bark is used as fish poison.

Baels are full of beta carotene, Vitamin B and a small quantity of Vitamin C and numerous bio-active compounds are extracted from it. In India, it has enough traditional value and has been used to cure various diseases since time immemorial.

2. Azadirachta Indica: Common name: Neem is very commonly found around the Temple area. It is a tall evergreen tree with the small bright green leaves. It is up to 100 feet tall. It blossoms in spring with the small white flowers. It has a straight trunk. Its bark is hard rough and scaly, fissured even in small trees. The colour of the bark is brown grayish. The leaves are alternate and consist of several leaflets with serrated edges. Its flowers are small and white in c by hindusaolour. The loive like edible fruit is oval, round and thin skinned



Medicinal Properties: The indigenous people of Nilgiris consume the dried and powdered tubers of the terrestrial orchids as an energizing tonic. Neem also holds medicinal value. Each part of neem is used in the medicines. It has been used in Ayurvedic medicines for more than 4000 years. Neem oil extracted from its seeds is used in medicines, pest control and cosmetics etc. Its leaves are used in the treatment of Chickenpox. According to the Hindus, it is believed that the Goddess of the chickenpox, Sithala lives in the Neem tree. Neem tea is usually taken to reduce the headache and fever. Its flowers are used to cure intestinal problems. Neem bark acts as an analgesic and can cure high fever as of malaria. Even the skin diseases can be cured from the Neem leaves. Indians even believe that the Neem can even purify diseases.

Cultural Importance : One can find Neem in almost all the parts of India. It is said that planting a Neem tree in the house is an ensured passage to heaven. Its leaves are hung on the main entrance to remain away from the evil spirits. Brides take bath in the water filled with the Neem leaves. Newly born babies are laid upon the Neem leaves to provide them with the protective aura. Neem gives out more oxygen than other trees. The neem tree is also connected with the Sun, in the story of Neembark 'The Sun in the Neem tree'. Neem is the wonder tree and finds mention in the number of ancient texts.

3. *Magnifera Indica* : Common name Mango is widely grown around the country and very commonly found in the surrounding of temples as the whole plant parts are considered sacred and widely used in all worship conduct by Hindus. The tree is also sacred to the Buddhist because it is believed that the Lord Buddha performed during his lifetime the instantaneous creation of a large mango tree from the seed at a place called Shravasti.



Medicinal Properties: Every part of the mango is beneficial and has been utilised in folk remedies in some form or another. Whether the bark, leaves, skin or pit ; all have been concocted into various types of treatments or preventatives down through the centuries. A partial list of the many medicinal properties and purported uses attributed to the mango tree are as follows: Anti viral, anti parasitic, anti septic, anti tussive, anti asthmatic, expectorant, cardiogenic, contraceptive, aphrodisiac, hypotensive, laxative and stomachic.

4. *Phyllanthus emblica* L. Commonly known as Amla and widely grown in the protected area. Amla (Indian gooseberry) is a medium sized plant that grows not more than 18 meters in height. The trunk is slightly curved and the branches are scattered around. The bark of the Amla plant is gray with hard reddish wood. It has a yellowish green or pinkish color flower and the fruit is pale yellow in color, round in shape and has six vertical stripes. A ripened Amla fruit is hard and weighs approximately between 60 and 70 grams. The leaves are lighter in weight, linear and long in shape and smells like lemon.



Amla is also commonly called as the Indian gooseberry and amalaki in Sanskrit. It has been a part of Ayurvedic medicine for more than thousand years.

Both dried and fresh Indian gooseberry has great health benefits. One of which is that it acts like a coolant if taken after meals. The Vitamin C content in Amla helps in improving the digestive system, rejuvenates the body, cures stomach constipation, helps in blood purification, reduces asthmatic problems, and improves eyesight. Along with these, amla improves immunity and also improves physical strength. It is used in many Ayurvedic applications for scalp treatment.

5. *Ficus religiosa* L. Commonly known as pipal has longest history of worship and it is worshipped even today as in the ancient times. As it a sacred tree, people place damaged idols, figures of god and goddess at its base. Doing Parikrama or circumambulation of Pipal daily destroys all kinds of inauspiciousness.

This tree is associated with spiritual understanding. Ashvattha is tree of life (Jivan Taru) and tree of knowledge (Bramha Taru). Pipal or Bo is the tree under which Prince Siddhartha sat in meditation and found enlightenment to become Buddha. Therefore it is also sacred to Buddhists and is planted beside temples.

Pipal tree releases oxygen 24 hours and does nocturnal fixation of atmospheric CO₂. This makes it different from other plants as most of plants release oxygen during day time in presence of sunlight but release CO₂ at night.

The 24 hour release of O₂ is possible in Peepal as it has ability to perform Crassulacean acid metabolism or CAM (named after Crassulacean family of succulent plants). CAM is an ecological adaptation of photosynthesis done in some plants growing in limited availability of water or CO₂ (such as arid condition, as epiphyte) and involves nocturnal CO₂ fixation done to maximize CO₂ uptake.



Medicinal Properties: Pipal has great medicinal value as well. It is extensively used in Ayurveda. Every part of this tree is edible and offers numerous benefits. Peepal is used in treatment of various infections, healing of wounds, improve fertility and treat poisoning. The bark is astringent and fruits are laxative. Seeds are cooling, refrigerant, laxative and alterative.

The leaves are purgative and tonic. They are useful in constipation and jaundice. Their oral intake gives strength to heart and helps to control the palpitation. They are also given to treat feverish condition and arresting bleeding or secretion.

6. *Ocimum americanum* L. Alternatively known as the holy basil or *ocimum sanctum*, tulsi is a common name in most Indian households. Easy to grow and widely found in the Indian subcontinent, not only is *tulsi* a revered, holy plant in Hinduism; it also finds its place in the ancient science of Ayurveda. *Tulsi* is commonly found in two varieties – the green coloured *Lakshmi tulsi* and the purple hued *Krishna tulsi*. Apart from the Indian subcontinent, it can also be found in tropical regions of most Southeast Asian countries.



Medicinal Properties: *Tulsi* is worshipped, is offered the gods and is grown in many Hindu households not in vain but for a well-established reason – this humble, inexpensive herb comes loaded with a host of benefits. *Tulsi* is extremely beneficial for humans. From warding off some of the most common ailments, strengthening immunity, fighting bacterial & viral infections to combating and treating various hair and skin disorders – just a few leaves of tulsi when used regularly can help resolve a host of health and lifestyle related issues.

It acts as a detoxifying, cleansing and purifying agent – both from within and without. Therefore it is good for skin – both when consumed and applied topically. It is also effective in treating skin disorders, itching and issues like ringworms. It can be made into teas or can be had raw, powdered, paste or in form herbal supplements. It

has antibiotic, anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anti-carcinogenic properties. It helps in relieving from fever, headache, sore throat, cold, cough, flu and chest congestion. It is also beneficial in treating respiratory ailments like chronic bronchitis, asthma et cetera. It is loaded with phytonutrients, essential oils, Vitamin A and C. Regular uses of tulsi consumption can also aid in balancing various bodily processes.

7. *Ficus religiosa* L. Commonly known as Bargad and has immense valuable tree in Indian mythology. Banyan tree is a sacred tree of Indian soil. It is tree that symbolises the Trimurti- Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. It is a tree of life and fertility. Bargad tree is native to India where it grows from low altitudes to 2000 feet (610 m), especially in dry regions.



Medicinal Properties : Banyan tree use is recommended in Ayurveda for promoting fertility and curing sexual debility. Leaf- buds are prescribed in Ayurveda for promoting conception. According to Ayurveda, putting few drops of the banyan tree juice in the right nostril of the pregnant woman protects and gives good health to unborn baby.

For treating pre-mature ejaculation Banyan Tree latex and leaves are very effective and in India people are using this and women worshipping Banyan tree.

The anti-diabetic effect of Banyan Tree bark is due to presence of flavonoids, water soluble and insoluble glycoside. In studies, the decoction and infusion was found effective in moderate diabetes but ineffective in severe diabetes.

8. *Musa paradisiaca* L. : Banana is the common name for herbaceous plants of the genus *Musa* and for the fruit they produce. It is one of the oldest cultivated plants. The entire plant is sacred for hindus and widely used in the worship of Lord Satya Narayan.

Medicinal Properties: All parts of the banana plant have medicinal applications: the flowers in bronchitis and dysentery and on ulcers; cooked flowers are given to diabetics; the astringent plant sap in cases of hysteria, epilepsy, leprosy, fevers, hemorrhages, acute dysentery and diarrhea, and it is applied on hemorrhoids, insect and other stings and bites; young leaves are placed as poultices on burns and other skin afflictions; the astringent ashes of the unripe peel and of the leaves are taken in dysentery and diarrhea and used for treating malignant ulcers; the roots are administered in digestive disorders, dysentery and other ailments; banana seed mucilage is given in cases of diarrhea in India. Antifungal and antibiotic principles are found in the peel and pulp of fully ripe bananas. The antibiotic acts against *Mycobacteria*. A fungicide in the peel and pulp of green fruits is active against a fungus disease of tomato plants. Norepinephrine, dopamine, and serotonin are also present in the ripe peel and pulp. The first two elevate blood pressure; serotonin inhibits gastric secretion and stimulates the smooth muscle of the intestines.

9. *Saraca asoca* Roxb commonly known as Ashoka Tree is one of the most legendary and sacred trees of India and holds an invaluable importance in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. It is an evergreen tree 15-20 meters high. The leaves are 15cm long and of oblong shape. Ashoka tree produces a huge bunch of sweet smelling flowers all through the year and profuse flowering occurs from February to May. The flowers are polygamous,

yellowish orange and scarlet. The plant grows faster in tropical and sub-tropical situation. The bark can be separated from 10 years older trees or more than that. All parts of the tree such as bark, leaves, flowers and seeds are used medicinally. Due to its medicinal value, it is known as a universal plant.



Medicinal Properties: The meaning of Ashok in Sanskrit is without grief/ sorrow less. Each part of the tree is of proven medicinal value and cures many disorders; hence it is called Ashoka. The bark is comprised of sodium, silica, magnesium, iron, calcium, aluminium and strontium. Other components include sterol, tannins, catechol and other calcium compounds.

- The barks, seeds and flowers of the tree are helpful in preparing capsules and tonics to solve various gynecological problems of women.
- It also reduces excessive and painful bleeding, leucorrhea and headache for women. Because of chloroform and methanol properties, the bark is used to cure bacterial and fungal infections.
- As the bark contains ketosterol, it treats uterine fibroids and other internal fibroids and is one of the most common household remedies for uterine disorders. Medicine prepared from bark also helps in removing worms and comforts from swelling of the stomach.
- Capsules and ointments prepared from Ashok tree can be used as a natural supplement of great benefit to treat irritations and burning sensation in the skin and complexion.

- Dried flowers are used to cure diabetes. It adds ease for indigestion.
- The extracted juice from the flower is used to cure dysentery.
- Medicine prepared from leaves, flowers and barks are used to cure diarrhea and purification of blood.
- Medicine prepared from the extract of Ashoka can be used for the cure of piles and bleeding caused due to piles.
- Powder from Ashok seed cures kidney stones.
- The ground seed is also used as a memory enhancer.
- The paste of the seed is used for urine retention.
- The ash prepared from Ashok tree cures rheumatoid arthritis and joint pain.

10. *Cynodon dactylon* L. Is widely known as Durba grass. In Hinduism, Durva(Doob) is one of the most sacred plant, only second to Tulsi. It is a plant used in numerous religious ceremonies since Vedic times as well as for medicinal purpose in Indian Ayurvedic medicine system. On Durvashtami Vrat (in Bhado), Hindu women worship Durva and fast. The rings made of this grass is worn during Home, Puja and Yagya. Durva is also offered to Lord Ganesh during worshiping.

Medicinal Properties: Doob grass(*Cynodon Dactylon*) is a grass with medicinal properties and used for treatment of fever, ulcer, stomach infection and other health problems. Doob grass is rich in phosphorus, calcium, sodium, potassium proteins, carbohydrates, alkaloids and flavonoids. It is antiviral and antimicrobial.

REFERENCES

1. **Gadgil M and Vartak V.D. 1975-** Sacred groves of India- A plea of the continuous conservation.
2. **Economic Botany 49:297-308.**
3. **J D and Chandan Subhash 1997 :** Sacred Groves around the earth and overview.
4. **Boogh and Ramakrishan 1983:** Sacred Groves and their role in environmental conservation.

Biospectra : Vol. 12(2), December, 2017 (Spl. Issue)

An International Biannual Refereed Journal of Life Sciences

