



Socio-Religious Importance of Plants in Bundelkhand Region of India

Ahirwar J.R.

Department of Botany, Govt. College Niwari, District-Tikamgarh, M.P. INDIA

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Abstract

The present study provides the information regarding the socio-religious importance of plants in Bundelkhand region of India. The rural and forest area of Bundelkhand were surveyed and covered extensively to record the socio-religious plants. During the survey 51 plant species of angiosperms have been enumerated which are being used by the people in various social and religious customs like marriage, worshipping, child birth, festivals and cremation.

Keywords: Socio-religious plants, rites and rituals, Bundelkhand.

Introduction

Bundelkhand is very important region of India. It is unique in many aspects being the central part of the country; it is much safe like heart in our body. Bundelkhand is spread over southern Uttar Pradesh and northern Madhya Pradesh, between 23°10' and 26°30' north latitude and 78°20' and 81°40' east longitude. Bundelkhand comprises thirteen districts: Jhansi, Lalitpur, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Mahoba, Banda and Chitrakoot (all in Uttar Pradesh), and Datia, Tikamgarh, Chhatarpur, Panna, Sagar and Damoh (all in Madhya Pradesh, India).

Bundelkhand region encompasses many plant species which are being used as food, shelter, clothing and medicines by the people of village communities. Besides these, some plants are used by the people in different social and religious customs, are known as *Socio-religious plants*¹. The relationship between man and plant communities is as old as his hunger, and long before science was born, our ancestors studied the plants around them to meet their basic requirements, which laid the foundation of civilization². Many festivals are associated with the significance of plants in India³.

Unfortunately, there is no written proof and information is available regarding the uses of those plants. Therefore, first priority must be given to study those plants and documented the traditional knowledge need to be popularized, so that all round awareness be made possible. An attempt has been made to record the socio-religious role of plants in Bundelkhand region of India.

Material and Method

During the year 2011 and 2012 the different area of Bundelkhand were surveyed and covered extensively to record

the socio-religious role of plants. The information collected on the basis of intensive interviews and long discussions with villagers of Bundelkhand region regarding the uses of plants in different rites and rituals. All of the plants were recorded and identified by consulting the available literatures^{4,5,6,7,8,9,10}. A list of plants is alphabetically prepared along with their botanical name, local name, family and uses.

Results and Discussion

From the above survey 51 plant species belonging to different families of monocot and dicot of Angiosperms have been enumerated and recorded in Bundelkhand region, which are being used in different social and religious customs. The relevant informations regarding the role of socio-religious plants have been documented as table -1.

Conclusion

On the basis of foregoing discussion it can be concluded that the 51 plant species have been enumerated which are being used in different rites and rituals like marriage ceremony, worshipping, child birth, festivals and cremation by the people of Bundelkhand region. People treat these plants like socio-religious entity and worship them. 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. It will inspire to conserve these plant species wherever possible.

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Table-1
Taxonomic details and uses of plants in various socio-religious customs

Botanical Name	Common Name	Family	Uses
<i>Abrus precatorius</i>	Ghunchu, Ghumchi	Papilionaceae	Fruits are used to form Baraina (just like a janeu) which worn by Bridegroom at the time of marriage ceremony.
<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Bel	Rutaceae	The leaves of this plant are dedicated to Lord Shiva on the occasion of Mahashivaratri and other religious occasion.
<i>Anthocephalus indicus</i>	Kadam	Rubiaceae	The plant is treated as pious and divine because Lord Krishna played their flute under this tree.
<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Neem	Meliaceae	Leaves of this plant are hanged on the door of concerning family after returning the cremation to avoid the bad effect of soul.
<i>Bambusa bambos</i>	Bans	Poaceae	The stem of this plant is buried under the ground of Mandap where marriage ceremony is organized.
<i>Boswellia serrata</i>	Salaih	Burseraceae	The stem of this plant is used by Hindus families for the construction of marriage Mandap.
<i>Butea monosperma</i>	Palash	Papilionaceae	Branches and leaves of this plant are used in the occasion of marriage ceremonies to cover the marriage Mandap. The fibers of root tie at the time of Bakarbandhu Purnima. It is worshiped by ladies on the occasion of Akshay Tritiya.
<i>Brassica campestris</i>	Sarson	Brassicaceae	The grains of this plant mixed with salt and chilies are used to remove the bad effect of an evil eye.
<i>Calotropis procera</i>	Akuaa	Asclepiadaceae	Flowers of this plant are dedicated to Lord Shiva.
<i>Cannabis sativa</i>	Bhang, Ganja	Cannabinaceae	Bhang is obtained by drying the young leaves and dried flowering tops of female plants known as Ganja. Both are offered to please Lord Shiva.
<i>Capsicum annum</i>	Mirchi	Solanaceae	Chilies along with lemons are hanged by businessman on their door to save from the effect of bad evils eye.
<i>Cicer arietinum</i>	Chana	Papilionaceae	Pulse of gram known as Deol is offered to God Bajrangbali at the time of Jethsudi Purnima.
<i>Citrus limon</i>	Nimbu	Rutaceae	Fruits of this plant are offered to please Goddess Durga at the time of Navdurga Utsava. It is one of the most important festivals of Hindus and celebrated all over the India.
<i>Clitoria ternatea</i>	Aparajita	Papilionaceae	It is considered as sacred plant and planted by people in their houses.
<i>Cocus nucifera</i>	Nariyal	Arecaceae	The fruits of this plant are offered to please God and Goddess on the occasion of many holy functions and festivals.
<i>Curcuma domestica</i>	Haldi	Zingiberaceae	Turmeric powder mixed with rice used to put mark on the forehead at the time of many social and religious occasions to show respect. Turmeric powder mixed with rice used for invitation on the occasion of marriage ceremony.
<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	Doob	Poaceae	It is used on the occasion of holy functions, festivals and marriages etc. Plant is also used at the time of child birth to convey the massage to the parent of married woman.
<i>Datura alba</i>	Dhatura	Solanaceae	Flowers and fruits of this plant are offered to please Lord Shiva.
<i>Emblica officinalis</i>	Amla	Euphorbiaceae	Hindus take their foods under this tree on the occasion of Ichchha Navmi in the month of Kartik.
<i>Epipremnum aureum</i>	Money plant	Araceae	People believe that money plant brings prosperity and happiness in the life. Hence people planted it in their houses.
<i>Eugenia jabolana</i>	Jamun	Myrtaceae	Branches and leaves of this plant are used on the occasion of marriage ceremonies to cover the marriage Mandap.
<i>Ficus religiosa</i>	Peepal	Moraceae	People believe that God and Goddess live in the root, stem and leaves of this tree. Hence it is worshipped by Hindus family.
<i>Ficus benghalensis</i>	Bargad	Moraceae	It is considered as sacred and divine plant. Hindus Ladies worship it for the long life of their husband.
<i>Ficus virens</i>	Pakar	Moraceae	It is a holy and divine plant. It is worshipped by Hindus family in many occasions.
<i>Gloriosa superba</i>	Kaliyari, Kirkitchyau	: Liliaceae	Root of this plant is considered as a symbol of quarrel. People believe that the root of this plant keep their enemies house to cause quarrel.
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	Jawa	Poaceae	It is the most important part of hawan samagri. It is also used to produce the green small shoot of plants of barley known as Jaware at the time Nardurga utsava.

<i>Ipomoea batatas</i>	Sakarkand	Convovulaceae	Boiled tuberous roots of this plant are eaten on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi.
<i>Lannea coromandelica</i>	Gunja	Anacardiaceae	The stem of this plant is used by Hindus families to construct the marriage Mandap
<i>Lawsonia alba</i>	Mehdi	Lythraceae	The paste of leaves of this plant is used as myrtle (mehdi) by ladies on the occasion of Rakshabandhan.
<i>Mangifera indica</i>	Aam	Anacardiaceae	The leaves of mango tied in a string are hanged on the door at the time of child birth, marriage ceremony and other holy functions. Branches and leaves are also used to cover the marriage Mandap.
<i>Madhuca indica</i>	Mahua	Sapotaceae	Flowers of this plant offered to worship the Harchhath. Delicate stem used as tooth brush by ladies at the time of Harchhath.
<i>Mitragyna parviflora</i>	Kaima	Rubiaceae	People believe that dying man gets heaven if wood of this tree is used in cremation. Hence people used its wood in cremation.
<i>Musa paradisiaca</i>	Kela	Musaceae	Leaves and fruits are used on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi.
<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i>	Kamal	Nymphaeaceae	It is believed that Goddess Laxmi resides in the flower hence, it is offered to him. Leaves of this plant are used as plate on which food is served at the time of various social and religious occasions.
<i>Nyctanthes arbortristis</i>	Harsringar	Nyctaginaceae	It is considered as a symbol of happiness and prosperity. So, People planted it in their house
<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	Bobai	Lamiaceae	The people of shepherd community make a cluster of Bobai known as Chhauhar and go door to door of villagers along with Chhauhar on the occasion of Diwali.
<i>Ocimum sanctum</i>	Tulsi	Lamiaceae	It is worshiped and cultivated in the Hindus homes. People believe that if Tulsi is kept on the head of dying man he gets heaven.
<i>Oryza sativa</i>	Dhan, Rice	Poaceae	Rice is used to put mark on the forehead along with haldi and roli at many social and religious occasions. The paddy is sown, when germinate in the form of green small shoot it is called Kajalia and used on the occasion of Rakshabandhan.
<i>Phoenix sylvestris</i>	Khajur	Arecaceae	The leaves of this plant are used to form diadem (Maur) worn by Bride and Bridegroom during his marriage ceremony.
<i>Piper betle</i>	Pan	Piperaceae	Leaves of this plant are offered to worship the God and Goddess. Leaves are also used in Dashara Milan samaroh at the time of Vijayadasm.
<i>Polyalthia longifolia</i>	Ashok	Annonaceae	Ashok considered as a sacred plant and people planted it in their houses because it is said that Sita took shelter under this plant. It is not real Ashok but people call Ashok due to its resemblance with real Ashok.
<i>Putranjiva roxburghii</i>	Putranjiva	Euphorbiaceae	The childless couples impressed their finger prints on main trunk of this tree for getting child.
<i>Sacchrum officinarum</i>	Ganna	Poaceae	Sugarcane is worshipped by Hindus on the occasion of Devothani Ekadashi which is celebrated after Diwali.
<i>Sacchrum spontaneum</i>	Kans, Kansa	Poaceae	This plant is worshipped on the occasion of Harchhath.
<i>Santalum album</i>	Chandan	Santalaceae	The wood of this plant used to put mark on the forehead at many social and religious occasions. Wood of this plant also used in cremation.
<i>Sesamum indicum</i>	Til	Pedaliaceae	Til mixed with water and used for bathing at the time of Makarsankranti, It is also considered as part of havan samagri in many social and religious occasion
<i>Tamarix ericoides</i>	Jhau	Tamaricaceae	Stem of this plant inserts to the head of cot by the people to save from horrible dreams.
<i>Trapa bispinosa</i>	Singhara	Trapaceae	Fruits powder of this plant is used as food at the time of fasting in many festivals.
<i>Triticum aestivum</i>	Gehun	Poaceae	Grains husk of wheat mixed with salt and mustard grains and used to save bridegroom from bad influence of evil eye. Boiled wheat grains used as a food in the initiation of Addra Nakshtra.
<i>Vigna mungo</i>	Urda	Papilionaceae	The seeds of this plant are offered to Holi to save from skin diseases.
<i>Ziziphus nummularia</i>	Ber	Rhamnaceae	The plant is worshipped on the occasion of Harchhath.

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