

“SOCIO - RELIGIOUS PLANTS FROM WESTERN PARTS OF NASHIK DISTRICT (MAHARASHTRA)”

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Abstract:-

A total number of 27 plant species belonging 25 genera and 19 families were documented from Western Parts of Nashik District (Maharashtra), which are used by tribals in different social and religious ceremonies and festivals. The dominant families of sacred interest are Moraceae and Arecaceae (3 species), Poaceae and Rutaceae (2 species). Trees are not regularly worshipped but certain trees like Bel, Pipal, Umbar and Amba are regarded as sacred trees. The wood of these trees is never used for burning as fuel. The Bel trees are never cut, Bel is associated with God. The Pipal, which is Holy tree of Hindus, is also held in reverence by Warli's, Barambha, one of the tribal spirits, is supposed to reside on this tree. A twig of the *Ficus racemosa*, *Ziziphus mauritiana*, *Mangifera indica*, *Syzium cumuni* tree is used in pre-wedding ceremony.

Key Words – Religious, Worship, Holy

Introduction:-

Nashik district is located between latitude 20°50 ' and longitudes 75°35' and extend over the area of 15,537 sq. km. It is bounded on the northwest by the Dangs and Surat district of Gujrat state on the north by Dhule district, on the east by Jalgaon and Aurangabad district, on the south by Ahmednagar and south-west by Thane district of Maharashtra state. District is divided in to 15 revenue Talukas. The Western Ghats of Sahyadri range stretches from north to south across the western portion of the district.

Since time immemorial plants played vital role in human civilization and development. Biodiversity is gifted by God in the form of nature that gives all basic requirements to mankind for their existence. Due to development and modernization, nature is under great threat because of their habitat destruction and overused. It has been observed that numbers of plants are being used for the worshipping of gods and goddesses by different indigenous communities in various ceremonies and festivals, which serve as a useful tool for conservation of plants. A forest plays a vital role from socio-religious point of view. The plants in the forest use for various purposes such as food, fodder, medicine, art and craft, for making agricultural implements and worship. It was observed that the tribals in the forest used specific plant species for social, cultural, religious festivals and spiritual values.

Materials & Methods:-

The data illustrated in this work is carried out during September 2019 to November 20019 based on the first hand information report obtained from tribals and rural people of Western Parts of Nashik District. Interviews of Vaidu, Bhagat, tribals such as Mahadeo koli, Bhill, Kokana, Warli and Elderly village people were taken for gathering truthful information on the uses of plants.

Description

1) *Achyranthus aspera* L. Aghada (Amaranthaceae)

- 1) Leaves are offered to God Ganesha for Ganesh puja on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi.
- 2) Leaves are used for bathing by the females in “Hartalika Vrat”.

2) *Aegle marmelos* Correa ex Roxb. Bel (Rutaceae)

- 1) Leaves are offered to Lord Shiva on the occasion of “Mahashivratri” and the “Four Shravani Somvars”.
- 2) Dried fruit is placed in flour for constant showering of “Mata Annapurna”.

3) *Anthocephalus kadamba* (Lamk) A Rich ex Walp Kadamaba (Rubiaceae)

- 1) Leaves are used in “Hartalika Vrat”.

4) *Annona squamosa* L. Sitaphal (Annonaceae)

- 1) Fruits and leaves are used to worship Goddess Laxmi.
- 2) The leaves are used for various religious ceremonies.

5) *Areca catechu* Linn Supari (Arecaceae)

- 1) The nuts are offered to lord Vishnu in Satyanarayan Puja and used in many religious ceremonies.

6) *Azadirachta indica* Ajuss Neem (Meliaceae)

- 1) The leaves are used on the occasion of Hindu new year “Gudipadawa”.

7) *Bauhinia recemosa* Lamk Apta (Fabaceae)

- 1) Leaves are distributed in the society as a gold during “Dashehara” festival.

8) *Butea monosperma* (Lamk). Taub Palas (Fabaceae)

- 1) Leaves and flowers are used in religious ceremonies.
- 2) Flowers are used to make dye in Holi festival.

9) *Calotropis procera* (Ait.) R.Br. Pandhari Rui (Asclepiaceae)

- 1) Leaves are offered to Lord Hanuman and Lord Shani for blessings.

10) *Curcuma longa* L. Haladi (Zingiberaceae)

- 1) Rhizome paste is applied on body of bride and grooms before marriage and other rituals.
- 2) Rhizome pieces are used in “Satyanaryan puja”.

11) *Cocos nucifera* Linn Naral (Arecaceae)

- 1) Fruits are offered to the Gods & Goddess in temples.
- 2) The branches are used in many religious ceremonies and festivals such as Satyanarayan puja, Anniversaries etc.

3) Branches are used for decoration purposes in festivals.

12) *Cynadon dactylon* L. Harali (Poaceae)

1) Leaves known as “Durwa” are offered to Lord Ganesha in Ganpati festival.

13) *Datura stramonium* L. Dhotra (Solanaceae)

1) Flowers and fruits are offered to Lord Shiva.

14) *Ficus bengalensis* L. Banyan (Moraceae)

1) Tree worship by the females on “Vatsavitri pournima.”

15) *Ficus racemosa* Linn Umber (Moraceae)

1) Leaves are used to sprinkle the sacred water from a sacred copper mug in various ceremonies.

2) Bark is used in Homa.

16) *Ficus religiosa* L. Peepal (Moraceae)

1) Tree is worship by triblas by offering Jaggerry, Coconut etc. and lamp is lightened to escape from “Munjoba”.

17) *Limonia acidissima* L. Kavath (Rutaceae)

1) Ripen fruits are eaten on “Mahashivratri” and Leaves are offered to Lord Shiva.

18) *Mangifera indica* Linn Mango (Anacardiaceae)

1) Leaves are used in religious ceremonies, mandap and marriages.

2) Leaves are tied in thread and hang on doors as a “Toran” on the occasion of Bail Pola.

19) *Musa paradisiaca* L. Keli (Musaceae)

1) Leaves and fruits are used in many festivals and ceremonies and placed at the entrance of houses on special occasions, especially at marriages and Satyanaryana pooja.

20) *Ocimum sanctum* L. Tulasi (Lamiaceae)

1) This is the most sacred plant found in every household.

2) Women worship it by lightening a lamp every day.

21) *Oryza sativa* L. Bhat (Poaceae)

1) Grains are used to put mark on the forehead along with kumkum at many social and religious occasions such as Diwali, Akshay Trutiya, Raksha Bandhan etc.

2) Rice grains are used as “Akshada” in wedding ceremonies.

22) *Phoenix sylvestris* Roxb. Kharik (Arecaceae)

1) Fruits are used in all religious ceremonies and in puja's.

23) *Piper betle* L. Nagwel (Piperaceae)

1) Leaves are used in wedding ceremony and in all worships.

24) *Ricinus communis* L. Erand (Euphorbiaceae)

1) Stem and leaves along with sugarcane are used on “Pournima” before Holi festival.

25) *Santalum album* Linn Chandan (Santalaceae)

1) Leaves are used to burn in funeral programs of death persons.

26) *Syziium cumini* Jambhul (Myrtaceae)

Leaves and twigs are used in wedding ceremonies.

27) *Zizyphus jujuba* Lamk. Bor (Rhamnaceae)

1) Fruits are used for Laxmipoojan during diwali.

2) Twigs are used in marriages and pre-wedding ceremonies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total number of 27 plant species belonging 25 genera and 19 families were documented from Western Parts of Nashik District (Maharashtra), which are used by tribals in different social and religious ceremonies and festivals. The dominant families of sacred interest are Moraceae and Arecaceae (3 species), Poaceae and Rutaceae (2 species). The 27 plant species are recorded with their botanical name, common name and family. Sacred plants have been conserved and get protected by the local people as sacred grooves. (Poudel, 2009). Plants like *Ficus bengalensis*, *F. religiosa*, *Oscimum sanctum*, *Calotropis procera*, planted in the public places. Turmeric powder (*Curcuma longa*) is used in Hindu wedding ceremony, where the brides and grooms take bath with turmeric powder. In wedding ceremonies bride and grooms makes 7 rounds in front of Lord Agni and takes oath for 7 generations. The leaves of *Aegel marmelos* are dedicated to Lord Shiva on the occasion of Mahashivratri and other religious occasion. Leaves of *Azadirachta indica* are used to keep away the evil spirits and hang on the door at the time of “Gudipadawa”. The fruits of *Cocos nucifera* are offered to please Gods and Goddess on the occasion of many holy functions and festivals. *Oscimum sanctum* is worshipped and cultivated in the Hindu homes. It is believed that if Tulsi is kept on the head of dying man he gets heaven. Musa plant is very important plant and all parts of the plant are widely used during all form of a Hindu worship. Each and every part of Musa sp. is important from worship point of view. On every Saturday leaves are made into garland and offered to God Maruti (Hanuman). During present investigation it was observed that sacred plants are found in every household and the religious activities boost up the mental health of the local people of Baglan Region of Nashik District.

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