



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ETHNOBOTANY OF SACRED PLANTS IN JAINISM: A STUDY

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Abstract

All the twenty-four Tirthankaras have sacred plants associated with them for salvation. Rishabhanatha is a first Tirthankar and Mahavira the twenty fourth Tirthankar in Jain religion. The first Tirthankar Rishabhanatha has associated with the plant *Ficus benghalensis* and Mahavira have associated with the plant *Shorea robusta*. Of these twenty-three plants belong to angiosperms and one plant belongs to gymnosperm, *Pinus roxburghii* associated with the Tirthankar Abhinandannatha. The angiospermic plant *Callicarpa microphylla* associated with two Tirthankaras Sumatinatha and Padmaprabhu, *Shorea robusta* associated with Sambhavanatha and Mahavira, similarly *Diospyros melanoxylon* is associated with Shreyaamsanatha and Kunthunath.

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Introduction:-

Jain religion is an ancient religion of India. Jainism believes in nonviolence and conserves all living world including plants as biodiversity (Jain, S.K. and S.L. Kapoor. (2007). They prefer medicines based on plants. The relation between religion and nature cannot be more apparent, there is very elaborate and comprehensive description of various plant species and their products in literature of Jain religion (Gadgil Madhav and Vartak, V.D.1976). The plants associated with Tirthankaras are more valuable in medicine and as biodiversity of the nature.

Methodology:-

The literature of plant species of all twenty four Tirthankaras sought from the research papers and book (Jain, S.K. and S.L. Kapoor, 2007;Kumar,Sehdev 2001).Plant species have been enumerated based on characteristics features observed in respective species with scientific name, family, common name, name of Tirthankaras and medicinal uses.

Enumeration:

1) Botanical Name: *Ficus benghalensis* L.

Family: Moraceae

Common Name: Bargad, Vad

Tirthankar: Rishabhanatha (Adinath)

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A large evergreen tree, leaves simple obovate, inflorescence hypanthodium, fruit green but red when ripe. Milky latex is applied externally for pains in rheumatism and lumbago. Infusion of bark used as tonic, astringent, used in dysentery, diarrhoea and diabetes. Seeds are cooling tonic. Leaves applied as poultice to abscesses. Root fibres useful in gonorrhoea.

2) Botanical Name: *Bombax ceiba* L.

Family: Bombacaceae

Common Name: Semal

Tirthankar: Ajitnath

Large deciduous trees. Leaves crowded at the end of branches, petiolate, digitately 5-7 foliate, leaflets 5-23 x 1.5-9cm., ovate-lanceolate, glabrous. Flowers crowded at the end of leaflet branches, crimson or yellowish, capsules woody, minutely apiculate, reddish brown. The bark of the tree is used to cure some skin disorders.

3) Botanical Name: *Shorea robusta* Roth.

Family: Dipterocarpaceae

Common Name: Sal

Tirthankar: Sambhavanatha

A large semi-deciduous hardwood timber tree. Leaves are simple, alternate, lanceolate-ovate, shiny and delicate green, flowers yellowish-white, terminal or axillary panicle and appear in early summer. Resin-astringent and used in dysentery, gonorrhoea, gout and for fumigations. The gum mixed with boiled milk it is remedy in cough, piles, bronchitis and leucorrhoea. The wood is very durable, highly resistant to termite attack and used for making furniture.

4) Botanical Name: *Pinus roxburghii* Sarg.

Family: Pinaceae

Common Name: Chir Pine

Tirthankar: Abhinandannatha

Evergreen conifer tall trees. Branches whorled generally horizontal and excurrent. The stem has two type of branches and the green leaves as the needles are confined only to the dwarf shoot that bear three needles. The scale leaves occur on the main stem, long shoots and also the dwarf shoots are brown in colour. Resin is used as stimulant, antiseptic, diuretic, rubefacient, vermifuge and internally as stomachic and as a remedy for gonorrhoea, externally as a plaster applied to buboes and abscesses for suppuration. Wood and oleoresin used in snakebite and scorpion sting.

5) Botanical Name: *Callicarpa macrophylla* Vahl.

Family: Verbenaceae

Common Name: Priyangu

Tirthankar: Sumatinatha

Evergreen small sized trees with opposite leaves. Leaves are elliptic -oblong to lanceolate. Flowers pink or purplish, reddish or rosy, flowering period July- November. Flowers are used in intestinal disorders, dysentery, diarrhoea, acidity, fever and blood disorders. Fruits are edible

6) Botanical Name: *Callicarpa macrophylla* Vahl.

Family: Verbenaceae

Common Name: Priyangu

Tirthankar: Padmaprabhu

Evergreen small sized trees with opposite leaves. Leaves are elliptic -oblong to lanceolate. Flowers pink or purplish, reddish or rosy, flowering period July- November. Flowers are used in intestinal disorders, dysentery, diarrhoea, acidity, fever and blood disorders. Fruits are edible

7) Botanical Name: *Albizia lebbek* (L.) Benth.

Family: Mimosaceae

Common Name: Siris, Shirish

Tirthankar: Suparshavanatha

It is a deciduous tree. Bark is greyish or pale brown. Leaves are bipinnate, alternate, oblong leaflets. Inflorescences are globular clusters greenish pale yellow or white fragrant flowers, blooming in April-May. The fruits are broad, reddish-brown pods. Bark is useful in leprosy and ulcers. Used as an ornamental and avenue tree.

8) Botanical Name: *Mesua ferrea* L.
Family: Guttiferae
Common Name: Naga Kesar
Tirthankar: Chandraprabha

An evergreen tree with red bark. Flowers white with rusty stalks and used as astringent, in cough with expectoration, made into paste with butter and sugar used in bleeding piles and burning of the feet. Flower buds used in dysentery. Unripe fruits are aromatic and sudorific. Bark-astringent, aromatic combined with ginger used as sudorific. Leaves and flowers are useful in snake bite and scorpion sting.

9) Botanical Name: *Terminalia bellerica* (Gaertn.) Roxb.
Family: Combretaceae
Common Name: Bahera, Behada
Tirthankar: Puspadanta

Deciduous trees. Bark dark grey and longitudinally fissured. Leaves broadly obovate. Flowers in axillary spikes greenish yellow or creamy white in colour. Fruits ovoid or ellipsoid. It is of medicinal use in Ayurvedic triphalachurna with Amla (*Phyllanthus emblica*) and Hirda (*Terminalia chebula*).

10) Botanical Name: *Adansonia digitata* L.
Family: Bombacaceae
Common Name: Kalpyriksha
Tirthankar: Shitalanatha

It is a small deciduous tree with smooth grey bark. Leaflets are sessile or sub sessile, obovate-oblong or elliptic-oblong, densely silky brown, hairy. Flowers are pendulous. Fruits are ellipsoidal densely hairy, pale brown. Flowering occurs in April-May and fruiting in June–December. The fruit pulp contains high amount of vitamin C, calcium, phosphorus, carbohydrate, fibres, protein and lipids and used as an appetizer and for juice. Seeds are used in malaria and asthma.

11) Botanical Name: *Diospyros melanoxylon* Roxb.
Family: Ebenaceae
Common Name: Tendu
Tirthankar: Shreyamsanatha

A large tree. Bark is used as an astringent, decoction of bark in diarrhoea and dyspepsia as tonic. A dilute extract used as astringent lotion for the eyes. Leaves used as diuretic, carminative, laxative and styptic. Dried flowers are useful in urinary, skin and blood diseases.

12) Botanical Name: *Bignonia atrovirens* Roth.
Family: Bignoniaceae
Common Name: Patala
Tirthankar: Vasupujya

Medium sized trees, with rough brown bark. Leaves are acuminate. Flowers in corymbs, seeds with membranous wings; flowering and fruiting season is from March to June. It is useful as an aphrodisiac.

13) Botanical Name: *Syzygium cumini* (L.) Skeels.
Family: Myrtaceae
Common Name: Jamun
Tirthankar: Vimalanatha

Moderate sized tree. Leaves ovate, lanceolate. Flowers fairly large, jointed with the pedicel and greenish white in colour. Berries globose pinkish white or dark purple in colour. Flowering and fruiting season is January to June. Seed powder is effective against diabetes.

14) Botanical Name: *Ficus religiosa* L.

Family: Moraceae

Common Name: Peepal, Pipal

Tirthankar: Anantanath

A large glabrous tree with grey bark. Leaves orbicular ovate, globose. Flowering and fruiting season is April to June. Tree is religious and worshipped by people. Decoction of young leaves is used for the treatment of general fever.

15) Botanical Name: *Clitoria biflora* L.

Family: Fabaceae

Common Name: Vishnukant

Tirthankar: Dharmanatha

Twining herbs with angular stem. Leaves are compound, leaflets elliptic-ovate. Flowers are axillary solitary, deflexed, light blue or dark blue in colour. Bracteoles are ovate pods. Long. Flowering and fruiting season is August to October. Seeds are anthelmintic. It is grown as an ornamental plant. Roots are used to treat abdominal swelling, sore throat and mucus disorder.

16) Botanical Name: *Cederella toona* Roxb.

Family: Meliaceae

Common Name: Nandi

Tirthankar: Shantinath

Tall, deciduous trees. Leaves unipinnate and leaflets 4-15 in pairs. Flowers are in drooping panicles, white and scented. Fruit capsules are oblong. Leaf juice is given in stomach disorders.

17) Botanical Name: *Diospyros melanoxylon* Roxb.

Family: Ebenaceae

Common Name: Tendu

Tirthankar: Kunthunath

A large tree. Bark is used as an astringent, decoction of bark in diarrhoea and dyspepsia as tonic. A dilute extract used as astringent lotion for the eyes. Leaves used as diuretic, carminative, laxative and styptic. Dried flowers are useful in urinary, skin and blood diseases.

18) Botanical Name: *Mangifera indica* L.

Family: Anacardiaceae

Common Name: Mango

Tirthankar: Arahamatha

Evergreen tall tree. Leaves are oblong or lanceolate, flowers are small terminal spikes. They are yellowish green in colour. Fruit is drupe which is fleshy and of various size. Flowering season is December and fruiting from February to July. The bark is astringent, it is used in diphtheria and rheumatism and it is believed to possess a tonic action on mucus membrane.

19) Botanical Name: *Saraca indica* L.

Family: Caesalpiniaceae

Common Name: Ashok

Tirthankar: Mallinatha

A small evergreen tree. Leaves compound, leaflets opposite and elliptic oblong, flowers are orange or orange yellow in colour. Flowering July to October. Bark astringent used in uterine affections and in menorrhoea in scorpion sting. It is also useful in dyspepsia, fever and burning sensation.

20) Botanical Name: *Michelia champaca* L.

Family: Magnoliaceae

Common Name: Nag Champa
Tirthankar: Munisuvratnatha

Evergreen small tree, leaves simple, alternate. Flowers yellowish to orange, fragrant, flowering June to September. Bark febrifuge, stimulant, expectorant, astringent, dried root and root bark is purgative and in the form of infusion useful emollient and mixed with curdled milk, can be applied to abscesses. Flowers and fruits considered to be stimulant, antiseptic tonic, stomach carminative, bitter and cooling used in dyspepsia, nausea and fever, also useful as diuretic in renal diseases, gonorrhoea. It is used in the mixture form with sesame oil (*Sesamum indicum*) for external application in vertigo. Oil extracted from flowers is used in ophthalmic, cephalalgia and gout. Juice of leaves is given with honey in colic. Seeds and fruits are used for healing the cracks in feet (Godbole, A. and Sarnaik, J 2004).

21) Botanical Name: *Mimusops elengi* L.

Family: Sapotaceae

Common Name: Bakula, Bakul

Tirthankar: Naminatha

Medium sized tree. Bark of the plant is astringent tonic useful in fevers. Leaves are used in snake bite. Pulp of ripe fruit is used to cure chronic dysentery. Seeds bruised and locally applied within the anus of children suffering from constipation.

22) Botanical Name: *Garcinia indica* Choisy

Family: Guttifereae

Common Name: Kokam

Tirthankar: Neminatha

Small to medium sized tree, leaves simple, dark green and elliptic ovate. Fruit is anti-scorpionic. Bark useful as an astringent. Oil is soothing and used in several skin diseases. A drink of infusion and its local application all over the body is prescribed in urticaria.

23) Botanical Name: *Anogeissus latifolia* (Roxb.ex DC)Wall.

Family: Combretaceae

Common Name: Dhau, Dhavada

Tirthankar: Parshvanatha

Deciduous trees, bark smooth, white-grey. Leaves are obtuse and silky. Flowering and fruiting season is March to July. The gum obtained from tree is used as medicine. Fresh bark is crushed with water to prepare a paste and paste is applied on sores to heal.

24) Botanical Name: *Shorea robusta* Roth.

Family: Dipterocarpaceae

Common Name: Sala, Sal, Sakhua

Tirthankar: Mahavira

A large semi-deciduous hardwood timber tree. Leaves are simple, alternate, lanceolate-ovate, shiny and delicate green, flowers yellowish-white, terminal or axillary panicle and appear in early summer. Resin-astringent and used in dysentery, gonorrhoea, gout and for fumigations. The gum mixed with boiled milk it is remedy in cough, piles, bronchitis and leucorrhoea. The wood is very durable, highly resistant to termite attack and used for making furniture.

Conclusion:-

It is noteworthy that all the twenty-four Tirthankaras meditated under the twenty plants of angiosperm and one plant of gymnosperm for enlightenment. Some angiosperm plants associated for meditation by two Tirthankaras such as *Diospyros melanoxylo* by Shreyaamsanatha and *Kunthunath*, *Callicarpa microphylla* by Sumatinatha and Padmaprabhu and *Shorea robusta* by Sambhavanatha and Mahavira. There is so much importance of plants and their aesthetic and medicinal values in Jainism that all Tirthankaras of present got their enlightenment meditating under various plants of medicinal value. The Tirthankaras and their respective plants usually belong to angiosperm plants except *Pinus roxburghii* belongs to gymnosperm plant associated with Tirthankar Abhinandannatha. All these angiosperm plants are also having importance in other religion of India and most useful in Ayurveda and herbal medicine, some aborigines of India are also used these plants for food and medicine (Palanisamy, K.2017). These

plants are basically Indian in origin, due to their importance for living world they should be conserve in large amount. Likewise, Jain garden should be erected near Jain temple according to the Jain Tirthankaras so the devotees can get the live collection of all these sacred plants for the worship.

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