



G.S.-5

BOTANY IN VEDIC LITERATURE

Dr. P.K.Mishra,
Deptt. Of Botany . Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribag.
(F-2, Ganpati Apartment, Saraidhella, Dhanbad- 828127,
JHARKHAND.)

INTRODUCTION

Indian culture has attached great respect to natural elements from time immemorial. People of ancient India were having adequate knowledge of plants and they used to use plants for their various day-to-day requirements. Evidence of trade and commerce related to plants and plant parts are available from Sindhu ghati civilization. In Vedic literature one finds information regarding plants and their different aspects like, classification, morphology, anatomy, physiology and their economic importance. Possible use of various plants in curing various types of human ailments is remarkably present in Rigveda and Atharvveda. Therapeutic prescriptions of Vedic literature are valid even today and are being widely used by ayurvedic and herbal physicians for treating human diseases. It is noteworthy that western people after experiencing side effects and limitations of synthetic drugs have turned towards herbal treatments. Some botanical terms used in Vedic texts are parallel to those used by modern day plant scientists. This clearly indicates that people of Vedic era were having adequate knowledge of plant and plant life. In following sections some specific references of plants found in Vedic texts are highlighted.

CLASSIFICATION AND MORPHOLOGY OF PLANTS

It is clear from Atharvveda that people of that era were well acquainted with different forms of plant life and they accordingly classified plants into tree, herbs creepers bushes etc (VIII- 8). There are mention of specific terms for various life forms of plants.

Vishakha — Plants with spreading branches
Manjari — Leaves with long clusture like arrangement
Sthambini — Bushy plants (modern day shrubs).
Eksranga — Plants producing only one branch at a time (monopodial branching).
Pratanavati — Plants with creeping habit.
Amasumati — Plants with many branches.
Kandini — Plants with underground and knotty joints.
In Rigveda names of different parts of plants have been referred which precisely correspond with modern description. Reference of terms like mula (for root), tula (for shoots), kanda (for stem), vatsa (for branches), pushpa (for flowers) and phala (for fruits).

A remarkably praiseworthy reference is one where capacity of green plants to trap solar energy and convert them into food is available (Rigveda 11-14 and VIII- 43). This explanation is clear indication that people of vedic era were well aware about the process of photosynthesis during which green plants convert atmospheric carbon di oxide into car-

bohydrate there by changing solar energy into chemical bonds. Modern day botanists started studying about this process quite late i.e. by the end of 19th century. A remarkable reference of anatomy of stem is available in Atharvveda (III-29) where terms like kashtra and daru has been used

MEDICINAL PLANTS IN VEDAS

Verses of Rigvedas reflect high degree of importance attached to medicinal plants.

" Satante rajana vishajah sahasra urveem gambhira sumstite" (1-4-29).

"Vaahaphaliniryaa aphalaa apushpaa yaseha pushpineeh" (X- 97-14).

"Oshadhih pratee medadhvam pushpaniteeh prasoovareeh: (X- 91-3).

Both Rigveda and Atharveda is full of specific description of plants with respect to their possible use for curing various diseases. Some plants along with their use in treatment of respective diseases are described in following paragraphs.

- 1) In Atharveda flowers of Rajani is recommended for treating jaundice.
- 2) Kustam and Jangid is suggested as medicine for leprosy.
- 3) In Rigveda there is mention of Haritala to administered to patient of jaundice.
- 4) Suparna, Aasuri, Swaroopa and Bhringraj is recommended for treating skin diseases.
- 5) Prsniparni is suggested as blood purifier.
- 6) Harinasringa is recommended for curing T.B.(3-7-1-3)
- 7) Satavari and Durva is suggested as general tonic,(3-11-1-8)
- 8) Rohini is recommended for treatment of fracture (4-12-1-7).
- 9) Pippali has been suggested as medicine for vata dosha (6-109-103).
- 10) Guggule is recommended for treating T.B.(10-36-1-3).
- 11) Ajasrunji, shikhandi and Guggule are suggested to be used in communicable diseases. (4-36-1-2).
- 12) Madhuca has been recommended for curing snake bite (7-56-1-22).
- 13) Amla, Ashwagandha, Arundhati, Arjuna, Bilva, Karanja, Khadira, Kumuda, Palaksha, Palash, Parni, Priyangu, Simsupa, Vibhitika etc. are other medicinal plants which has found place in vedic writings.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from above discussion that scientific references of different aspects of plant life are available in vedic literature. Description of medicinal plants in Vedas is highly significant and there is urgent need to strengthen these studies. Some of the plants referred in Vedas need to be investigated on the line of modern Botany. Some, for example is still debatable point among Botanists and different workers refer different plants. Some recognize Ephedra as Soma while others consider some mushroom as equivalent plant. A detail scientific study of vedic Botany is therefore urgent.