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Vedic plants for healing

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Abstract

The four stages of human life (Brahmacharya, Grhastha, Vanaprastha, Sanyasa) is highly connected with forest directly or partially where plants, trees, herbs are taking part there in. It can be said that the forest had its unique role for earth, for air, for water, for rain, for healing, for agriculture, for birds and animals, for herbs particularly in Vedic age. Here, in this present research paper an attempt is made to highlight the Vedic plants used for the purpose of healing, which was highly popularized in Vedic age.

Keywords: Vedic plants, healing, Brahmacharya, Grhastha, Vanaprastha, Sanyasa

Introduction

Human life starts in a systematic manner in connection to the forest particularly in the stage of *Brahmacarya* where he used to get knowledge under the guidance of a Guru. In the stage of *Grhasthasrama* he depends upon forest for agriculture, construction of the houses with forest equipment and also the forest materials at the time of his need. The third stage of life is called *Banaprastha* where he used to stay at forest to have *Sadhana* for the tranquility of his body and mind. At the last stage of life i.e. *Sanyasasrama*, he passed his remaining time till death by performing yogic practices. By leaving all sorts of attachments and family bondages he used to search to get Divine Bliss. As a whole, the four stages of human life is highly connected with forest directly or partially where plants, trees, herbs are taking part there in. In other word, it can be said that the forest had its unique role for earth, for air, for water, for rain, for healing, for agriculture, for birds and animals, for herbs particularly in Vedic age. Here, in this present research paper an attempt is made to highlight the Vedic plants used for the purpose of healing, which was highly popularized in Vedic age.

According to *Vrksayurveda* plants are classified into four groups namely, herbs, trees, creepers and shrubs. They transmit through seeds, branches and roots. It says-

वनस्पतिद्रुमलता गुल्माः पादपजातयः ।

बीजाल्काण्डात्तथा कन्दात्तज्जन्म त्रिविधं विदुः ॥ *Vrksayurveda* - 271

The plants that bear fruits without flowers are called herbs and those that bear fruits after flowering are called trees. It says-

ते वनस्पतयः प्रोक्ताः विना पुष्पैः फलन्ति ये ।

दुमाश्चान्ये निगादिताः पुष्पैः सह फलन्ति ये ॥ *Vrksayurveda* - 272

Those, which develop into tendrils, are called creepers and those which are bushy with many branches are called shrubs. It says-

प्रसरन्ति प्रतानैर्यस्ता लताः परिकीर्तिताः ।

बहुस्तम्बा विटापिनो ये ते गुल्माः प्रकीर्तिताः ॥ *Vrksayurveda* - 273

The word *Bhuvah* is very often used in Vedas. *Gayatrimantra*, which is considered s *Gurumantra*, also has the word *Bhuva*. *Bhuva* means destroyer of misery (*Dhukhanasaka*). The concept of misery can be divided into three major heads.

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1. *Adhyatmika* - misery related to body, sense organs and mind
2. *Adhibhautika* - misery created or originated from the self
3. *Adhidaivika* - misery by natural calamities like fire, air and earthquake

All the living beings in this world have undergone with many difficulties in the form of diseases, which are caused by the body and mind. To get relief from such diseases, it is necessary to have the knowledge of the science of Vedic Plants, which is the part of Medical Science. *Ayurveda*, a text exclusively discusses on this particular area. Some scholars accept it as an ancillary to *Rgveda* and some accept it as an ancillary to *Atharvaveda*. Traditionally it is believed that Brahma is the founder of *Ayurveda* or Medical Science. To have a prosperous and longevity of life to a human being, there was great contribution of creepers, herbs, trees and forest as reflected in Vedic literature. We may come across many references from Veda signifies the utility of herbs, trees and the protection of the Environment by Vedic invocation. In the form of invocation, Vedic mantras are as follows-

नमोवृक्षेभ्यः॥ *Yajurveda 16.17*
 वृक्षाणां पतये नमः, औषधीनां पतये नमः, अरण्यानां पतये नमः
 ॥ *Yajurveda 16.20*
 मधुमान्नो वनस्पतिः ॥ *Rgveda 21.90.80*
 औषधयः शान्तिः, वनस्पतयः शान्तिः ॥ *Yajurveda 36.96*

In this context, *Yajurveda* says, to get relief from the misery and unhappiness, we have kept Medicine (*Aushadhi*) for you in this Universe. You must know the knowledge and have a peaceful life by utilizing the same. It is said-

भेषजमसि भेषजं गवेश्वाय पुरुषाय भेषजम् । सुखम् मेषाय मेष्ट्वै
 ॥ *Yajurveda 3.59*

In the ancient age, Medicines were provided to get relief from the diseases of both man and animal. Putting more emphasis towards the preservation of the herbs *Yajurveda* says, we have love towards herbs. We must know to protect and develop the same. (*Yajurveda 16.17*) Again it is said, O herbs, please protect us. It is rightly said *Oshadhayah Santih, Vanaspatayah Santih*, because the herbs are cause of peace. (*Yajurveda 36.96*)

A hymn in *Rgveda* (10.97) is addressed to an *Oshadhi* (herb) praying to relieve people from pain and disease. The term *Soma* is very often used in *Rgveda* nearly thousand times. It is a matter of discussion even today among the scholars whether it is a plant or a creeper. Anyway, a Mantra of *Rgveda* refers to the significance of the *Soma*. It is said, "I have such power and strength within me that I can lift this earth from one place to another as I drank the juice of *Soma*". It says-

हन्ताहं पृथिवीमिमां नि दधानीह वेह वा कुवित् सोमस्यापामिति
 ॥ *Rgveda 10.119.3*

From this reference, it is understood that *Somarasa* is considered as an energetic tonic for a strong health. It is also said that, *Soma* is the supreme among all the medicinal herbs.

सोम औषधीनामधिराज ॥ *Gopathabrahmana 1.17.*

Taittiriya samhita of *Yajurveda* (VII.3.19.20) and *Rgveda* (10.97.15) also give reference to the various parts of *Oshadhi* and *Vanapati* such as *Mula* (root), *Tula* (short), *Kanda* (stem), *Valsa* (twig), *Skandha* (trunk), *Sakha* (branch), *Parna* (leaf), *Puspa* (flower), *Phala* (fruit), *Daru* (inner wood), and *Majja* (pith).

There are many references of herbs available in *Atharvaveda* which have more powerful to get relief from disease. Some of the noted herbs are *Pippali* and *Apamarga*, which are very much popular among the people today. Regarding *Pippali* it is said that, it is the only herb to give relief from *Vataroga, Unmada* and *Apasmara*. *Atharvaveda* says:

पिप्पली क्षिप्तभेषज्यु नातिविद्धभेषजी ।
 तां देवां समुकल्पयन्नयं जीवितवा अलम् ॥ *Atharvaveda - 6.10.91*

Sayanacharya, the commentator of Vedas says in this context -

पिप्पली वातरोगशेषस्य भेषजी निवर्तिका ।
 एकैव औषधिः सर्वरोगनिवारणेन सर्वां प्राणिनः जीवयतुमलम्
 ॥

Like *Pippali, Apamarga* was also accepted as one of the best herbs in Vedic age. To get relief from *Ksudha* (hunger), *Trushna* (thirsty), *Santanahinata* (childlessness) this herb has great importance. By describing the significance of *Apamarga, Ayurveda* says -

क्षुधामारं तृष्णामारं तथा अनपत्यताम् ।
 अपामार्गं त्वया वयम सर्वं तदपमृज्महे ॥ *Atharvaveda - 4.17.6*

The herbs like *Arjuna, pilakhana, Adhara, Ajasrngi, Arataki* and *Tiksnasrngi* are best for purifying water, which are discussed in *Atharvaveda* (4.37.4-6). In another context, *Atharvaveda* says that the smoke of *Guggula* is highly applicable for the patient who is getting severe pain in his chest due to the disease of *Rajayaksma*. As it is said -

मुञ्चामि त्वा हविषा जीवनाय कमज्जातयक्ष्मादहत राजयक्ष्मात् ॥
Atharvaveda - 3.11.1

Another reference of *Atharvaveda* says that, by using the *Guggula* in the sacrifice a person can be protected from the disease of *Yaksma*. It is said-

न तं यक्ष्मा अरुन्धते, नैनं शपथो अश्रुते ।
 यं भेषजस्य गुल्गुलो, सुरभिर्गन्धो अश्रुते ॥ *Atharvaveda 19.38.1*

Moreover, we may have also the references about the treatment of animals and birds in the Vedic literature. A statement of *Atharvaveda* can be noticed carefully. It is said, उतैनां ब्रह्मणे दद्यात् (*Atharvaveda 3.28.2*) means when an animal became ill it should be immediately handed over to a *Brahmana*. If this explanation of *Acharya Sayana* is true,

there will be no harm at all, because *Brahamana* is considered as doctor as it is explained in a mantra of Yajurveda. (विप्रः स उच्यते भिषक् - Yajurveda 12.80)

A mantra of *Atharvaveda* said, an herb named as *Arundhati*, keeps animals out of diseases, and increases the milk giving standard of the cows. It says-

अनडुद्ध्रस्तं प्रथमं धेनुभ्यस्त्वमरुन्धती ।
अधेनवे वयसे शर्म यच्छ चतुष्पदे ॥ **Atharvaveda 6.59.1**

Another mantra of *Atharvaveda* speaks about the herb *Audumbara* which gives good energy and power, enhances the fertility and extends the milk-giving standard to the animals by using it in the form of *Mani* (to fix or tie-up in the animal's body). It says:-

औदुम्बरेण मणिना पुष्टिकामाय वेधसा ।
पशूनां सर्वेषां स्फातिं गोष्ठे मे सविता कर्त् ॥ **Atharvaveda 19.31.1**

Through this statement of *Atharvaveda* it can be concluded that, not only Vedic Plants help the human being alone to eradicate the diseases but also they help the animals for their good health and sound life.

A root of the herb named as *Muni* (Divine sage as Max Muller translated) by which a surgical incident is narrated in *Atharvaveda*. As it says -

मुनेर्देवस्य मूलेन सर्वा विध्यामि ता अहम् ॥ **Atharvaveda 7.74.1**

It means, "With the root of *Muni* I pierce and penetrate all them". It shows the use of the herbs at the time of surgery is highly discussed in Veda.

By using the herbals it is also noticed that, hair growth (*Athvaveda* 6.137.2), removing the poison (*Athvaveda* 4.7.1) and the evil spirit (*Athvaveda* 29.1) etc are highly narrated in Vedic literature.

In *Atharvaveda*, many herbs are discussed, but some of the herbs are not identified yet. In whole Vedic literature there are 260 herbs available but only 130 herbs are similar to the present Ayurvedic Sciences and remaining are under doubt among the experts.

The division, quality and power to destroy the disease by the herbs are also discussed in *Yajurveda* (12.77) in details. Some of the noted herbs which are available in Vedas for curing disease like *Yaksma*, *Slesma*, *Jwara*, *Kustha* and they are –

अश्वत्थ	:	Yajurveda - 12.79	नितत्रि	:	Atharvaveda 6.136.1
अपमार्ग	:	Atharvaveda - 35.11	न्यग्रोध	:	Atharvaveda 4.37.4
असिक्री	:	Atharvaveda 1.23.3	पर्ण (पलाश)	:	Yajurveda 12.79
अजशुंगी	:	Atharvaveda 4.37.2	पाठा	:	Atharvaveda 2.27.4
अर्जुन	:	Atharvaveda 4.37.4	पिप्पली	:	Atharvaveda 6.10.91
अप्सरा	:	Atharvaveda 4.38.1	पृश्निपर्णी	:	Atharvaveda 2.25.1
अरुन्धती	:	Atharvaveda 6.59.1	पुनर्नवा	:	Atharvaveda 8.7.8
आंगिरसि	:	Atharvaveda 8.7.10	बलसनाशिनी	:	Atharvaveda 8.7.10
आंजन	:	Atharvaveda 19.44.1	मधुला	:	Atharvaveda 5.15.1
आसुरी	:	Atharvaveda 1.24.1	सूनि	:	Atharvaveda 7.74.1
ऊर्वारुक	:	Yajurveda 3.60	रोहिणी	:	Atharvaveda 4.12.1
उत्तानपर्णी	:	Atharvaveda 3.18.2	विषदूषणी	:	Atharvaveda 8.7.10
उदुम्बर	:	Atharvaveda 19.31.1	वैकृत	:	Atharvaveda 5.8.1
ऋषभ	:	Atharvaveda 4.38.5	वैश्वदेवी	:	Atharvaveda 8.7.4
कुष्ठ	:	Atharvaveda 5.4.1	शमी	:	Atharvaveda 6.11.1
कृष्णा	:	Atharvaveda 8.7.1	शर	:	Atharvaveda 1.2.1
केशवर्धिनी	:	Atharvaveda 6.21.3	शिखंड	:	Atharvaveda 4.37.4
खदिर	:	Yajurveda 3.6.1	शेषहर्षिणी	:	Atharvaveda 4.4.1
गूल	:	Yajurveda 19.38.1	सहस्रवर्णी	:	Atharvaveda 8.7.13
जंगिड	:	Yajurveda 19.34.1	सोमराज्ञी	:	Atharvaveda 6.96.1
तीक्ष्णशुंगी	:	Yajurveda 4.37.6	सोम	:	Atharvaveda 8.7.20
दूर्वा	:	Yajurveda 13.20	हिरण्यवी	:	Atharvaveda 6.95.2
दर्भा	:	Atharvaveda 8.7.20	हिरक	:	Atharvaveda 4.3.1
नलाशा	:	Atharvaveda 6.15.3			

From the above discussion, we may conclude that Indian mind was so sharp in Vedic age to find out the life and sense in plants and also identify their medical service to the mankind.

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