



Sacred Grove: Mythological Beliefs Used As “*In Situ*” Conservation of Biodiversity

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Abstract

The West Nimar region of Madhya Pradesh comprises of two districts, namely Barwani and Khargone district. They are inhabited by Bhil, Bhilala, Rathya and Barela tribes. Sacred groves are the oldest existing units that are known as ancient Botanical garden and modern biodiversity Hotspot. Sacred groves in general are a valuable tool of “In Situ conservation” of biodiversity. Ethnomedicinal property of plants was collected from the indigenous community. Panwa village is located in Kasrawad tehsil of Khargone district in Madhya Pradesh India. It is situated 19 km away from tehsil Kasrawad and 50 km away from District Khargone. The Sacred grove located between 22° 07' and 48° 00" N Latitude and 75° 35' and 60° 00" E Longitude and 304 M above sea level.

INTRODUCTION

Sacred groves are important ecological centers to study the potential vegetation. Sacred groves are present all over the world. The word sacred groves divine holy or related to God and groves tracts with different or specific types of vegetation. Sacred groves are small belts of virgin forest with rich diversity, which have been traditionally protected by the tribal people for centuries for their totems, religious beliefs and taboos that the deities reside in them and protect them from wretchedness. Sacred groves act as an ideal centre for biodiversity conservation. Several plants and animals that are threatened in the forest are still well conserved in some of the sacred groves. It has been observed that several medicinal plants that are not to be found in the forest are abundant in the sacred groves (Khan *et al.*, 2008). The sacred groves of Asia and Africa and royal hunting forests are the historical examples (Chandrashekara and Sankar 1998). It is believed

that these sacred virgin forests date back to thousands of years when human society was in the primitive state. Gadgil and Vartak (1975) have traced the historical link of the sacred groves to the pre-agricultural, hunting and gathering stage of societies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The present survey was done during 2017-19. The study was based on Ethnomedicinal-botanical survey of nearby the sacred grove. The medicinally important plant specimens were collected and preserved in the herbarium of Botany Department S.N. Govt. P.G. College Khandwa for future record. Important plants were identified by standard literature (Cooke, 1966; Chopra *et al.*, 1956; Haines, 1974; Shastri, 1977 and Solanki, 1984). Following is the alphabetical list of plants with their scientific names, local name, family and plant parts used in each case for particular disease.



Figure: 1. Location of the Saatmatra Sacred Grove in Madhya Pradesh



Figure2. Saatmatra Temple of Panwa

Table 1 List of Plants, With their Ethnomedicinal Properties, Found in Panwa

Sr. No.	Botanical Name & Family	Local Name	Part Used	Disease
1.	<i>Acacia catechu</i> (L.f.) Willd (Fabaceae)	Khair	Bark	Skin Disease
2.	<i>Aegle marmelos</i> (L.) Correa (Rutaceae)	Bael	All parts	Diabetes, wealth and prosperity
3.	<i>Anthocephalus chinensis</i> (Lam.) A.Rich. ex Walp.	Kadamb	Bark	Fertility
4.	<i>Argemone mexicana</i> L. (Papaveraceae)	Satyanashi	Root, Latex	Dysentery
5.	<i>Azadirachta indica</i> A. Juss.(Meliaceae)	Neem	Whole plant	Skin Disease, Leprosy, Dyspepsia, Ulcer
6.	<i>Butea monosperma</i> Lamk (Fabaceae)	Dhak palas	Flower Roots, and Seed	Stem and Root bark powder is used to apply on injury caused to axe, snake bite.
7.	<i>Bombax ceiba</i> L. (Bombacaceae)	Semal	Root	Used for surgical dressing in the case of wounds and to increase sexual vigor
8.	<i>Cassia fistula</i> Linn. (Caesalpinaceae)	Amaltas	Leaves, Stem and Roots	Diabetes, Antipyretic, abortifacient, demulcent, decreases inflammation and heat of the body useful in chest complaints, throat troubles, liver complaints and diseases of eye and gripping.
9.	<i>Delbergia sissoo</i> Roxb. (Fabaceae)	Sheesham	Leaves, Bark and Roots	Eye disease and Scabies
10.	<i>Emblica officinalis</i> Geartn.	Aawala	Leaves, Fruits and Root	Used as sources of Vitamin c,
11.	<i>Euphorbia hirta</i> L. (Euphorbiaceae)	Dudh Ghas	Leaves	Treatment of gastrointestinal disorders, Diarrhea, Dysentery
12.	<i>Ficus benghalensis</i> L. (Moraceae)	Bargad	Whole plant	Gonorrhoea, Scabies and Snake bite.
13.	<i>Ficus racemosa</i> L. (Moraceae)	Gular	Fruit, Latex	To cure Stomachache, menorrhoea and hernea. Latex is used to dress the neck of patient of tonsils and to dress the scrotum of child.
14.	<i>Ficus religiosa</i> Linn. (Moraceae)	Pipal	Whole plant	Powder of seeds taken for three days during menses sterilizes women for long time.
15.	<i>Haldinia cordifolia</i> (Roxb.) Ridsd.	Haldya	Bark	Powder of bark used to cure Jaundice.
16.	<i>Madhuca longifolia</i> (Koenig) ex.L.	Mahua	Root and Bark	Powder of bark/root used to cure Jaundice.
17.	<i>Terminalia arjuna</i> Roxb. (Combretaceae)	Arjuna	Bark, leaves	Asthma, bile duct disorders, scorpion stings
18.	<i>Tectona grandis</i> Linn. (Fabaceae)	Sagon	Bark, Flower, Seed and Oil	Useful in treatment of piles, leucoderma and dysentery
19.	<i>Zizyphus mauritiana</i> Lamk. (Rhamnaceae)	Beri	Fruits	Cold and Cough
20.	<i>Zizyphus xylopyrus</i> Willd. (Rhamnaceae)	Ghont	Fruit and Leaves	Skin eruptions and dye is used in tanning of lather.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The soil texture is Sandy, Loam light gray to brown in colour and acidic in nature with a pH between 6 and 7. In the temple of goddess "Saatmatra" in the village Panwa of Khargone district a large number of devotees gather every day. They take prayers and bow their heads before the goddess due to this mob a short of fair is held every day. In this Temple people from far and wide come and offer a "Chunari" to the goddess when their prayer is heard by the goddess. People say that one who takes bath in these seven pools on Tuesday gets rid of and disease whatsoever by the grace of the goddess. Tuesday is supposed to be auspicious for these baths there is a Neem tree near the temple. The ground water flows continuously through the roots of this tree and goes to these seven pools, this water is sweet to drink like coconut water. There is a temple of God "Bhairon" people go to this temple prior to the Saatmatra has become a famous place of deep belief and miracle. There are several Neem trees around this temple the entire area is covered with greenery. No one here dares to cut the trees, they fear if they do, so they will be cursed by the angry goddess. This is really nice to ward saving trees and maintaining the density of the forest, various culture and religious festivals are often arranged by local people, within these patches which they call "Mela" as a way of conservation of Nature. Sacred groves have served as important reservoir of biodiversity sacred groves and its biodiversity protected due to the religious beliefs of people residing in and around these groves. India has a very high number of sacred groves that play an important role in biodiversity.

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