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## Ethnomedicinal Importance Of Plants Used In Religious Ceremonies In The Narmadapuram Region Of Madhya Pradesh, India

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### Abstract

The intricate relationship between religious practices and traditional medicine has long shaped the cultural and healthcare landscapes of rural India. This study documents 55 plant species commonly used in religious ceremonies within the Narmadapuram region of Madhya Pradesh, highlighting their profound ethnomedicinal significance. These plants, belonging to diverse taxonomic families such as Fabaceae, Poaceae, Rutaceae, and Moraceae, are deeply integrated into ritualistic practices associated with major deities like Shiva, Vishnu, Durga, and Ganesh. Our ethnobotanical data reveals that these species serve a dual purpose—spiritual reverence and therapeutic application—addressing a wide spectrum of ailments, from digestive disorders and skin diseases to respiratory and gynecological issues. Ultimately, this study underscores the urgent need to conserve traditional knowledge systems and promote the sustainable utilization of these invaluable plant resources.

**Keywords:** Ethnobotany, Religious plants, Narmadapuram, Medicinal plants, Traditional knowledge

### 1. Introduction

Ethnomedicinal practices represent a vital component of indigenous knowledge systems, particularly in regions where deep-rooted cultural traditions and rich biodiversity intersect (Sharma & Mujumdar, 2003). In India, the plants utilized in religious ceremonies frequently possess potent medicinal properties, reflecting a profound, generational understanding of nature among local communities (Jain, 1991).

The Narmadapuram region, situated along the sacred Narmada River, is distinguished by both its floristic diversity and its vibrant cultural heritage. Religious rituals in this area regularly incorporate numerous plant species—such as *Aegle marmelos*, *Ocimum sanctum*, and *Ficus religiosa*—which are considered holy while simultaneously functioning as cornerstones of traditional healing. The seamless integration of spirituality and healthcare has historically ensured the conservation and sustained use of these plants across generations.

### 2. Materials and Methods

#### 2.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in the Narmadapuram district of Madhya Pradesh. Located in the central Indian region along the banks of the Narmada River, the area is characterized by tropical climate conditions that support a highly diverse range of vegetation.

#### 2.2 Data Collection

Data collection was carried out through a multi-pronged approach to ensure comprehensive documentation. This included extensive field surveys and in-depth interviews with local priests, traditional healers, and elderly villagers who serve as custodians of this generational knowledge.

Additionally, direct observations of local religious ceremonies and rituals were conducted. Through these methods, a total of 55 plant species were documented, detailing their botanical names, local names, families, associated deities, and specific medicinal uses.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

The documented plants were systematically categorized based on their taxonomic families, the types of ailments they are used to treat, and their specific religious significance.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Diversity of Ethnomedicinal Plants

The study recorded 55 plant species distributed across over 25 taxonomic families. The most dominant families identified in the study area included Fabaceae, Poaceae, Rutaceae, and Moraceae. The complete list of observed plants, their religious affiliations, and their medicinal applications are detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Ethnomedicinal Plants and Their Religious Significance in Narmadapuram**

S.No	Botanical Name	Local Name	Family	Main Deity	Medicinal Uses
1	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Beal	Rutaceae	Mahadeo	Digestive health, diabetes, skin care, respiratory problems, ear infection, stomach ulcers.
2	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Neem	Meliaceae	Sheetla Devi	Skin care, oral health, immunity boost.
3	<i>Anthocephalus cadamba</i>	Kadamb	Rubiaceae	Krishna	Skin diseases, diarrhea, wound healing, gastrointestinal issues, diabetes, oral and eye health, pain, fever.
4	<i>Areca catechu</i>	Supari	Arecaceae	Ganesh	Oral health, digestive aid, wound healing.
5	<i>Bambusa bambos</i>	Baans	Poaceae	All deities	Kidney stones, joint pain, tuberculosis, fever.
6	<i>Bauhinia variegata</i>	Kachnaar	Fabaceae	Durga	Thyroid, skin diseases, gynecological health, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant.
7	<i>Butea monosperma</i>	Palash	Fabaceae	Ram	Anthelmintic, skin care, anti-inflammatory, digestive aid.

S.No	Botanical Name	Local Name	Family	Main Deity	Medicinal Uses
8	<i>Calotropis gigantea</i>	Aak, Akawwa, Madar	Asclepiadaceae	Mahadeo	Pain and inflammation, skin care, respiratory issues, digestive system, snake bite, toothache.
9	<i>Citrus limon</i>	Neebu	Rutaceae	Durga	Digestive health, immunity boost, kidney stones, skin and oral health, anti-inflammatory.
10	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>	Nariyal	Arecaceae	All deities	Rehydration, respiratory issues, fever, antimicrobial, antifungal.
11	<i>Curcuma longa</i>	Haldi	Zingiberaceae	All deities	Wound healing, respiratory relief, anti-inflammatory, digestive aid, skin care.
12	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	Doob	Poaceae	Ganesh	Skin diseases, wound healing, digestive issues, blood purification, immunity boost, mental health, urinary infection.
13	<i>Desmostachya bipinnata</i>	Kushaa	Poaceae	All deities	Urinary disorders, skin diseases, wound healing.
14	<i>Datura metel</i>	Dhatura	Solanaceae	Mahadeo	Anticholinergic, respiratory conditions, pain relief.
15	<i>Ficus benghalensis</i>	Bargad, Badh	Moraceae	Vishnu	Wound healing, dental care, digestive issues, diabetes, rheumatism, female health.
16	<i>Ficus religiosa</i>	Peepal	Moraceae	Bramha, Vishnu, Mahesh	Skin care, respiratory issues, digestive health, ear pain, wound healing.

S.No	Botanical Name	Local Name	Family	Main Deity	Medicinal Uses
17	<i>Gossypium hirsutum</i>	Kapaas	Malvaceae	All deities	Ear pain, wound healing, skin care, balances <i>kapha</i> and <i>vata</i> .
18	<i>Hibiscus rosa-sinensis</i>	Gudhal, Jason	Malvaceae	Durga	Skin care, hair care, blood pressure, menstrual health, digestive issues.
19	<i>Madhuca indica</i>	Mahua	Sapotaceae	Jagannath	Immunity booster, joint and back pain relief, skin care.
20	<i>Mangifera indica</i>	Aam	Anacardiaceae	All deities	Digestion and constipation, immunity, cancer prevention, memory health, heart health.
21	<i>Ocimum sanctum</i>	Tulsi	Lamiaceae	All deities	Immunity, wound healing, skin diseases, digestion, diabetes, antioxidant, cancer prevention.
22	<i>Oryza sativa</i>	Dhaan	Poaceae	All deities	Joint and bone care, diabetes.
23	<i>Phoenix sylvestris</i>	Chhind	Arecaceae	Mahadeo, Badadeo	Anemia, digestion, constipation, joint weakness, heart and blood pressure, skin and hair health.
24	<i>Santalum album</i>	Chandan	Santalaceae	All deities	Skin care, cooling effect, fever, mental peace, stress relief, headache relief.
25	<i>Triticum aestivum</i>	Genhu	Poaceae	Jagannath	Diabetes, kidney stones, skin and hair care, wound healing, digestion, constipation.

S.No	Botanical Name	Local Name	Family	Main Deity	Medicinal Uses
26	<i>Emblica officinalis</i>	Amla	Phyllanthaceae	Vishnu, Laxmi	Digestive aid, hair and skin care, chronic diseases.
27	<i>Ficus racemosa</i>	Gular	Moraceae	Vishnu, Marriage ceremonies	Diabetes, wound healing, skin care, gastrointestinal, dental care, gynecological disorders.
28	<i>Syzygium cumini</i>	Jamun	Myrtaceae	Vishnu, Krishna	Diabetes, blood purification, anemia, oral health, skin care, digestive health.
29	<i>Prosopis cineraria</i>	Shami	Fabaceae	Shiv, Shanideo	Skin diseases, respiratory conditions, digestive health.
30	<i>Bombax ceiba</i>	Semal	Malvaceae	Shiv	Wound healing, bleeding piles, skin care, sexual weakness, uterine disorders.
31	<i>Terminalia elliptica</i>	Saj	Combretaceae	Badadeo, Gram devta	Burns and inflammation, stomach ailments, skin care, wound healing, diarrhea.
32	<i>Commiphora wightii</i>	Guggal	Burseraceae	All deities	Anti-inflammatory and anti-arthritic, skin care, detoxification.
33	<i>Nyctanthes arbor-tristis</i>	Harsingaar	Oleaceae	Krishna	Arthritis and joint pain, fever, digestive health, skin care, respiratory issues.
34	<i>Clitoria ternatea</i>	Aprajita	Fabaceae	Vishnu, Durga, Laxmi, Shiv	Brain tonic, mental health, reproductive system, inflammation, respiratory care, eye care, digestive health.

S.No	Botanical Name	Local Name	Family	Main Deity	Medicinal Uses
35	<i>Coix lacryma-jobi</i>	Vaijanti	Poaceae	Krishna	Skin care, immunity, diuretic, joint pain.
36	<i>Achyranthes aspera</i>	Latjira	Amaranthaceae	Shiv, Ganesha	Oral health, wound healing, skin care, digestive system, respiratory problems, kidney stones, eye disorders, gynecological health.
37	<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i>	Khajoor	Arecaceae	Hanumanji	Digestive health, fever, respiratory conditions, skin infections, toothache, jaundice.
38	<i>Rosa indica</i>	Gulab	Rosaceae	Laxmi, Durga, Hanuman, Ganesh	Gulkand, digestive aid, skin care, stress management, eye health, wound healing.
39	<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i>	Kamal	Nelumbonaceae	Laxmi, Vishnu, Bramha	Fever, diarrhea, bleeding piles, menorrhagia.
40	<i>Piper betle</i>	Paan	Piperaceae	Ganesh, Laxmi, Navratri, Marriage	Digestive health, respiratory relief, wound healing, oral health, headache, constipation.
41	<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i>	Long	Myrtaceae	Hanuman, Shanideo, Durga	Digestive aid, respiratory relief, anti-inflammatory, immunity booster.
42	<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	Jav, Jo	Poaceae	Durga, Pitra puja	Diabetes, digestive and urinary disorders, skin care, detoxification.
43	<i>Vigna radiata</i>	Moong	Fabaceae	Shiv	Digestive health, fever, heart health, antidiabetic, detoxification.

S.No	Botanical Name	Local Name	Family	Main Deity	Medicinal Uses
44	<i>Vigna mungo</i>	Urad	Fabaceae	Shanideo, Pitra puja	Nervous system health, reproductive health, muscle and joint pain, digestive health, skin and hair care.
45	<i>Sesamum indicum</i>	Til	Pedaliaceae	Shanideo, Vishnu	Vata balancing, bone and joint health, skin and hair care, oral health, digestive aid, respiratory care.
46	<i>Cicer arietinum</i>	Chana	Fabaceae	Durga, Shanideo, Vishnu, Laxmi	Skin care, digestive health, blood sugar regulation, anemia, heart health.
47	<i>Saccharum officinarum</i>	Ganna	Poaceae	Tulsi vivah, Vishnu, Laxmi	Jaundice, liver health, diuretic, kidney health, dehydration, vata and pitta balancing.
48	<i>Tagetes erecta</i>	Genda	Asteraceae	Ganesh, Laxmi, Vishnu	Skin care, wound healing, ear infection, digestive issues, eye care, respiratory care.
49	<i>Ruta graveolens</i>	Sitab	Rutaceae	Sitava Devi	Joint pain, muscle pain, digestive aid, eye health, respiratory problems, gynecological issues, skin care.
50	<i>Lawsonia inermis</i>	Mehdi	Lythraceae	Parvati Devi, Marriage ceremonies	Skin diseases, headache, fever, hair care, liver and spleen health, arthritis, diarrhea, sunburn.
51	<i>Saraca asoca</i>	Ashok	Fabaceae	Shiv-Shakti, Kamdeo	Gynecological disorders, uterine tonic, skin care.
52	<i>Ziziphus mauritiana</i>	Ber	Rhamnaceae	Shivji	Digestive health, respiratory health, wound healing, insomnia,

S.No	Botanical Name	Local Name	Family	Main Deity	Medicinal Uses
					immune booster, blood purification, skin care.
53	<i>Elettaria cardamomum</i>	Elaichi	Zingiberaceae	Vishnu, Ganesh, Laxmi	Digestive health, respiratory relief, oral health, heart and metabolic health, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory.
54	<i>Saccharum spontaneum</i>	Sindoor	Poaceae	Durga, Vishnu, Shraddha	Urinary disorders, gynecological issues, bleeding piles.
55	<i>Bixa orellana</i>	-	Bixaceae	Hanuman, Durga, Ganesh, Laxmi	Nervous system, chronic disorders, respiratory issues, skin care, digestive aid.

### 3.2 Religious Significance

The flora documented are intrinsically tied to the worship of major deities. This spiritual association naturally enhances their conservation and promotes their regular utilization. Key associations include:

- **Shiva (Mahadeo):** *Aegle marmelos*, *Datura metel*, *Calotropis gigantea*
- **Vishnu:** *Ficus benghalensis*, *Syzygium cumini*
- **Durga:** *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*, *Citrus limon*
- **Ganesh:** *Cynodon dactylon*, *Areca catechu*

### 3.3 Ethnomedicinal Uses

Beyond their ritualistic value, the documented plants are actively used to treat a broad spectrum of everyday and chronic ailments:

- **Digestive Disorders:** Addressed using *Aegle marmelos*, *Mangifera indica*, and *Piper betle*.
- **Skin Diseases:** Treated with *Azadirachta indica*, *Curcuma longa*, and *Calotropis gigantea*.
- **Respiratory Problems:** Managed through *Ocimum sanctum*, *Datura metel*, and *Elettaria cardamomum*.
- **Diabetes:** Regulated using *Syzygium cumini*, *Ficus racemosa*, and *Triticum aestivum*.
- **Gynecological Disorders:** Addressed via *Saraca asoca*, *Bauhinia variegata*, and *Sesamum indicum*.
- **Wound Healing:** Supported by *Curcuma longa*, *Cynodon dactylon*, and *Ficus benghalensis*.

## 4. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a profound correlation between local religious practices and ethnomedicinal knowledge. Plants such as *Ocimum sanctum* (Tulsi) and *Aegle marmelos* (Bel) are worshipped daily, a practice that inadvertently ensures their ongoing availability and ecological protection. Such traditions essentially act as informal, community-driven conservation strategies (Gadgil & Vartak, 1976).

The specific medicinal applications documented here align seamlessly with earlier ethnobotanical studies conducted in central India (Kala, 2005). For instance, the use of *Azadirachta indica* is widely recognized in scientific literature for its antimicrobial properties, just as *Curcuma longa* is celebrated for its powerful anti-inflammatory effects.

The dual role of these plants—revered as sacred and utilized as medicine—suggests that religious beliefs have historically served as a foundational pillar for public health management in rural India. However, rapid modernization and the gradual decline of traditional practices currently pose a significant threat to the survival of this holistic knowledge system.

## 5. Conclusion

This study shines a light on the rich ethnomedicinal heritage of the Narmadapuram region, demonstrating how plants used in religious ceremonies simultaneously serve as crucial healthcare resources. The meticulous documentation of this traditional knowledge is imperative for three main reasons: biodiversity conservation, the promotion and validation of herbal medicine, and the preservation of cultural identity. Moving forward, there is an urgent need to bridge the gap between traditional wisdom and modern scientific research to validate these therapeutic properties and ensure these vital plant resources are utilized sustainably.

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