

Traditional Socio-cultural Wisdom on Indian Puranic Plants in the Present Context

Vartika Jain

Department of Botany, Government Meera Girls' College, Udaipur-313001, Rajasthan, India.

E-mail: vartikabotany@gmail.com

Received : 22 February 2023 • **Revised :** 18 March 2023 • **Accepted :** 11 April 2023 • **Published :** 10 May 2023

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Jain, V. 2023. Traditional Socio-cultural Wisdom on Indian Puranic Plants in the Present Context. *Journal of Historical, Archaeological and Anthropological Studies*, 1: 1, pp. 45-56.

Abstract: Narratives are important means of inculcating social, cultural and moral values. India, a country with a rich repository of intellect and cultures is not an exception. It has a long history of oral as well as written narratives. Indian *Puranas* are pieces of evidence of written narratives which deploy and communicate cognitive models of the environment in form of various educative tales. There are 18 major *Puranas* along with some minor ones which give information about contemporary social relations, cultural domains, floral and faunal diversity, animal behaviour, topography, the weather of the country etc. Plants are referred to in Indian *Puranas* for their various uses in human life such as medicine, food, cosmetics, town planning, garments, ornaments, religious rites etc. 170 plants, mentioned for their use in cosmetics, perfumes, ornamentation and various socio-cultural rituals in seven *Puranas* namely, *Vamana Purana*, *Vayu Purana*, *Kurma Purana*, *Matsya Purana*, *Brahmavaivarta Purana*, *Agni Purana* and *Brahma Purana* were compiled in this paper and scientific analysis revealed that majority of them belong to higher plant group, Angiosperms. It is interesting to note that many of these plant species are still prevalent for their specific uses as mentioned in *Puranas*. For example, the use of *Arka* (*Calotropis gigantea*), *Palasa* (*Butea monosperma*), *Khadira* (*Acacia catechu*), *Shami* (*Prosopis cineraria*), *Apamarga* (*Achyranthes aspera*) etc. in *Havana* for the achievement of wealth, peace and victory could be seen in the current era. Some of such socio-cultural aspects of *Puranic* plants relevant in the present context have been discussed in the paper.

Keywords: *Agni Purana*, Cosmetics, Ornamentation, Perfume, Religious rites

Introduction

Cultural traditions are characteristic signs representing a particular social community. Sometimes these traditions are inculcated among generations through narratives which are expressive modes

of communication, learning and remembering using various models of fiction and/or non-fiction. Narratives represent simulations of experiences gained from the physical, social and mental environment (Wertsch 2000). India is a rich country in ethnic and cultural diversity and every social community has its own specific cultural trend. The ancient Hindu community has obtained its various cultural practices in historic heritage through oral as well as written narratives. Indian *Puranas* are one of the strongest shreds of evidence of written narratives which have significantly contributed to shape the cultural traditions of Hindu communities and are generally considered sacred books. There are 18 major *Puranas* along with some minor ones which besides instructing about socio-religious ceremonies and code of conduct also communicate some cognitive models of the environment in form of various educative tales.

As plants are the nearest neighbours of man, their significance can't be underestimated in human life. Hence, several plant species are referred to in Indian *Puranas* for their various uses in the lives of mankind. Relationships between Man-Plant are studied under '*Ethnobotany*' – a very dynamic branch of Botany. These Man-Plant relationships are broadly categorized into two, *i.e.*, Need-based and Culture-based man-plant relationships. Need-based relationships include the use of plants for food, fodder, fibre, medicine etc. and Culture-based relationships include the use of plants for performing various socio-cultural rituals or plants as a part of paintings, folktales, folk songs, proverbs, totems etc. (Jain and Jain 2017).

It is important to mention here that there was no scientific nomenclature system for plants when *Puranas* were written and plants were referred with their local/vernacular names. Sensarma (1989) worked for several decades and made correct identification of plant species mentioned in seven *Puranas* namely, *Agni Purana* (AP), *Brahmavaivarta Purana* (BvP), *Brahma Purana* (BP), *Kurma Purana* (KP), *Matsya Purana* (MP), *Vayu Purana* (VP) and *Vamana Purana* (VmP) and finally listed scientific identity of 359 plants (both wild and cultivated species). However, the scientific names of 80 plants have been changed out of them (Dash *et al.* 2015) and identity of some of the *Puranic* plants could not be established yet. Sensarma (1989) has collected information from these *Puranas* and categorized them under various headings such as plants in forests, gardens and royal palaces, plants as medicine, treatment of animals, toxicology, reproductive physiology, plants in food and alcoholic drinks, plants in house building, furniture making, town planning, plants in cosmetics, perfumery, garment making, cleansing, military and plants used in *Vasikarana* (mesmerism) and religious rituals.

Puranic plants give a glimpse of ancient ethnobotanical relationships. Some of these traditional man-plant relationships exist even today while many more new uses with those plant species are also evident in the current era. Some such studies have been carried out in the recent past (Nath *et al.* 2015; Sikarwar *et al.* 2015). Nath and Jain (2015) studied *Puranic* plants having medicinal uses in today's ethnomedicinal perspective and found some interesting observations. Because of this, an attempt has been made to enumerate plants revealing cultural man-plant relationships such as plants mentioned in these seven *Puranas* for their use in cosmetics, perfumes, ornamentation and various socio-cultural rituals based on the work of Sensarma (1989) and to ascertain their relevance in the present context.

Methodology

For this purpose, data from the book entitled '*Plants in the Indian Puranas – An Ethnobotanical investigation*' by Sensarma (1989) was thoroughly screened to find out the plants mentioned for perfumes, cosmetics, incense, offering, *shraddha*, *Havana* and socio-cultural rituals in seven *Puranas*.

Currently, valid scientific names and families of those plants are given in Table 1 after confirming their botanical identities from authentic sources (Website 1-4, Sahoo *et al.* 2002; The Wealth of India 1948-76). Scientific names and families for the rest of the plants mentioned in the main text are given in Appendix A where plants are listed alphabetically by their names as mentioned in *Puranas*. Some plants are mentioned by more than one name in *Puranas*, though scientifically indicating a single plant species. All such names are kept together in a single column in Appendix A. The present-day uses of these plants were ascertained through a major ethnobotanical database of India, namely, *Compendium of Indian Folk Medicine and Ethnobotany* (1991-2015) by Jain and Jain (2016). The botanical identity of a few plants could not be established yet (marked with an asterisk in Appendix A) and hence those columns are left blank. All words in languages other than English are italicized.

Results and Discussion

Narratives sometimes represent models of experiences bringing accurate information about Geography, Botany or Psychology (Sugiyama 2001). *Puranas* are no exception. Various tales, impart much knowledge useful for human subsistence or survival as well as communicate about social actions needed on various occasions. Plants are part of various socio-cultural ceremonies and rituals all over the world (Niroula and Singh 2015). Sensarma (1989) listed 359 plant species mentioned for various purposes in seven *Puranas*. It was observed that out of them, there are 170 plant species which reflect cultural man-plant relationships (Table 1, Appendix A). Scientific analysis shows that out of these, one is Lichen (*Saileya*), two belong to the Gymnosperm group (*Sarala* and *Devadaru*) and the rest 140 plants belong to the Angiosperm group which are classified among 55 Dicot and 09 Monocot families. Grass family *Poaceae* with 12 plant species and family *Fabaceae* with 14 plant species top the list among Monocot and Dicot groups respectively. Other dominant families are *Apocynaceae* with eight plants (mostly fragrant flowers) followed by *Malvaceae* with five and *Lamiaceae* and *Rubiaceae* each with four plant species. Thirty plants which are mentioned for their use in sociocultural rituals are yet not scientifically identified (Appendix A).

Interestingly, the majority of these plant species are found almost all over the country suggesting that writers of *Puranas* had ample knowledge of useful plants of the almost entire country from Assam in East (*Aguru*) to Rajasthan in West (*Guggula*) and from Kashmir in North (*Kumkuma*) to Peninsular India in South (*Rakta Candana*) which might be due to their frequent travelling in the country or interactions with scholars of distant regions (Jain *et al.* 2015). In the present paper, the role of these plant species is discussed under two major headings namely, Plants in religious rituals and Plants as cosmetics, Perfume, and Incense.

Plants in religious rituals

In *Puranas*, various plants are mentioned for performing several religious ceremonies and rituals. The following few paragraphs describe some of these rituals (Sensarma 1989):

Offering to God

In *Vamana Purana*, some specific plants are mentioned for religious offerings in a particular season. It reflects the biocultural knowledge of sages about the phenology of plants *e.g.* an offering of *Datura* flowers to Lord Shiva in *Sravana* (July-August) and *Vrsadhvaja* in *Asadha* (June-July) months, *Pankaja* flowers in *Ashvin* month (September-October), *Karavi* flowers in *Kartika* (October-November), *Tagara*

flowers during *Pausa* (December-January), *Kumud* flowers and seeds of *Tila* during *Magha* (January-February). Similarly, in *Brahmavaivarta Purana*, *Candan* is mentioned to be offered to *Hari* (Lord Vishnu) during *Vaishakh* (April-May), Leaves of *Tulsi* in *Kartik* to *Hari* and leaves of *Vilva* to Lord Shiva on *Shivratri* (February-March). One can observe awareness towards the environment among sages of those times when they describe using *Vilva* leaves during *Shivratri* which is usually the season of its leaf shedding and in this way; they save the plant from unnecessary damage and indirectly help in conservation. Offerings of selected flowers during selective seasons indicate towards availability of those flowers during that time of year and more or less these practices still exist among Hindu communities in the present era, for example, the offering of *Vilva* and *Datura* to Lord Shiva, *Tulsi* and *Candan* to Lord Vishnu, *Til* during *Magha* etc. (Jain and Jain 2016). It depicts that the traditional socio-cultural wisdom of scholars persists even among urbanites without much being affected by ongoing urbanization and modernization.

Agni Purana also mentions that worshipping of *Hari* (Lord Vishnu) with certain flowers may lead to obtaining certain virtues e.g. worship with *Tamala* leads towards liberation from sorrows and sufferings; *Padma*, *Ketaki* or *Kunda* worship helps in acquiring a state of bliss and *Mallika* or *Kuranta* worship may release from all sins. It also states that *Hara* (Lord Shiva) could be pleased with the flowers of *Arka*, *Dhustura* and *Mandara*. It is also true that many of the people following these practices are not aware of the benefits of worshipping God with a particular plant such as written in *Puranas* but faithfully obeying the practices as narrated by their elders and ancestors. This shows the significant role of narratives in the progression and existence of any tradition over a long period.

There is mention of different types of special *Vrata* (Fasting with a specific purpose) in *Matsya Purana* such as *Ananta Tritya Vrata* in which different kinds of flowers are recommended for worship purposes in different months, for example, *Mallika/Asoka* in *Chaitra*, *Gandhapatala* in *Vaisakha*, *Kamala/Mandar* in *Jyestha*, *Ambuj* in *Ashadh*, *Kadamba/Malti* in *Shravana*, *Vandhujiva* in *Ashvin*, *Satapatra* in *Kartik*, *Jati* during *Agraahayan*, Yellow *Kuruntaka* in *Pausa*, *Kunda/Kumkuma* in *Magh* and *Jati/Sindhuvaraka* in *Phalgun* (months as per Hindu Calendar). Further, *Sarsapa*, *Kusodaka* and *Vilva* leaves and fruits, *Arka* flowers, *Yava* grains and *Sringavari* fruits are recommended for offering in all months. Flowers of *Mandara*, *Parijata*, *Kalpapadapa*, *Haricandana*, *Santana* are mentioned to be used during *Parvata Pradana Vrata* while *Kusa*, *Vilva*, *Karpura*, *Aguru*, *Yava*, *Tila*, *Pippali*, *Mandara*, *Malati*, *Dhustura*, *Sindhuvara*, *Asoka*, *Mallika*, *Patala*, *Arka*, *Kadamba*, *Durva* and *Utpala* are recommended during *Sivacaturdasi Vrata* (Fasting to please Lord Shiva). Flowers of *Mallika*, *Asoka*, *Kamala*, *Kadamba*, *Utpala*, *Malati*, *Kubjaka*, *Karavira*, *Vana*, *Amlana*, *Kumkuma*, *Sindhuvara*, *Java*, *Kusumbha* and *Satapatrika* for worship and *Nispava*, *Kusumbha*, *Ksira*, *Iksa* and *Kustamvaru* as offering are recommended during *Saubhagya-Sayana Vrata* (Sensarma 1989).

Plants in Havana

Havana is a small-scale *Yajna* where oblations are offered to sacred fire while reciting holy mantras. Various kinds of woods (*Samidha*) are offered to *Havana* for achieving certain specific goals. As mentioned in *Agni Purana*, for getting wealth, *samidha* of *Patala* and *Campaka* plants; for obtaining kingdom, *Vilva*; for hegemony over other kings, *Padma* seeds; for disease eradication, *Durva* and satisfaction of *navagraha* (A group of nine planets, Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, North and South Lunar nodes), plants such as *Arka*, *Palasa*, *Khadira*, *Apamarga*, *Udumbara*, *Sami*, *Durva* could be utilized. Among these wood of *Aegle marmelos*, *Butea monosperma*, *Achyranthes*

aspera, *Prosopis cineraria*, *Cynodon dactylon*, *Magnolia champaca*, *Nekumbo nucifera*, *Stereospermum chelonoides* are still used for this purpose (Jain and Jain 2016). Plants mentioned for performing *Navgraha Puja* are utilized even in urban areas indicating the importance of traditional knowledge in the present context. The use of certain Puranic plants in the present era among many indicates dynamism in ethnobotanical knowledge and highlights the importance of periodic field surveys (Jain 2005).

Matsya Purana also recommends wood of certain plants *i.e.* *Arka*, *Palasa*, *Khadira*, *Apamarga*, *Asvattha*, *Udumbara*, *Sami*, *Durva* and *Kusa* as *Samidha*. It further suggests that for performing *Tulapurusa Dana Yagna*, logs of *Sala*, *Ingudi*, *Candana*, *Devadaru*, *Vilva* should be utilized as pillar on perimeter of raised platform and *Tila* should be used in various offerings (Sensarma 1989).

Plants for the Shradha ceremony

In Hinduism, on specific dates and times, some rites are performed for the peace of a deceased soul called as *Shradha* ceremony. It is also emphasized in different *Puranas*. There are various plants which are considered valuable for this ceremony *e.g.* *Candan*, *Aguru*, *Tamala*, *Usira*, *Padma*, *Utpala*, *Til* Oil [VP]; Grains of *Vrihi*, *Yava*, *Masa*, *Syamaka*, *Nivara*, *Godhuma*, *Tila*, *Mudga*, *Priyangu* and Fruits of *Amra*, *Panirata*, *Mrdvika*, *Dadimba*, *Vidari*, *Bharunda*, *Srngataka*, *Kaseruka* [KP]; grains of Wheat, Gram, Sesame, *Mudga* and different varieties of Rice, fruits of *Amra*, *Amrataka*, *Vilva*, *Dadimba*, *Vijapura*, *Amalaka*, *Ksira*, *Narikela*, *Paarusaka*, *Naranga*, *Kharjura*, *Draksa*, *Nila*, *Kapittha*, *Patola*, *Priyala*, *Karkandhu*, *Vadara*, *Vikamkata*, *Vatsaka* and flowers of *Jati*, *Campaka*, *Lodhra*, *Mallika*, *Vana*, *Barbara*, *Asoka*, *Atarusa*, *Tulasi*, *Tilaka*, *Sephalika*, *Kujjaka*, *Tagara*, *Ketaki*, *Yuthika*, *Atimukta*, *Kamala*, *Kumuda*, *Pundarika*, *Indivara*, *Kokanada*, *Kahlara*, *Kustha*, *Kukkuti*, *Usira*, *Granthiparni* and *Sundari* [BP].

Besides, some plants are also considered unfit for this ceremony *e.g.* *Bhandira*, *Upkama*, *Kurundaka*, *Balbaja*, *Varana*, *Anjana*, *Abhyanjana*, *Lasuna*, *Grnjana*, *Palandu*, *Pindamulaka*, *Vartaku* and *Saka* [VP] and *Rajamasa*, *Masura*, *Koradusaka*, *Markata*, *Kodrava*, *Palam*, *Ghrtakumari*, *Kirata*, *Grnjana*, *Cukra*, *Varuna*, *Satapuspa*, *Nalika*, *Sukragandha*, *Lasuna*, *Manakanda*, *Visakanda*, *Alavu*, *Kusmanda*, *Vartaka*, *Lakuca*, *Vibhitaka*, *Bala*, *Sivajata*, *Kaleya*, *Raktavana*, *Pindalu*, *Purusalva*, *Hingu*, *Phanisa*, *Nimba*, *Bhu-nimba*, *Rajika*, *Kustamvuru*, *Kalingottha* [BP]. Many of these unsuitable categorized plants are thorny in morphology, poisonous, sour, bitter and acrid or *tamsik* (static) in nature and that might be the reason behind their selection to avoid them.

Plants which could be donated to Brahmins during this ceremony are also described in *Kurma Purana* *e.g.* *Dhanya*, *Tila*, *Iksa* along with vegetables, fruits and sugar and some plants are prohibited for donation *e.g.* *Pippali*, *Kramuka*, *Masura*, *Kusmanda*, *Vartaka*, *Bhustrna*, *Svarasa*, *Kusumbha*, *Pindamula*, *Tanduleya*, *Rajamasa*, *Kodrava*, *Kovidara*, *Palam* and *Marica* (Sensarma 1989). *Shradha* ceremony is one of the most important sacraments among Hindus and this *Puranic* information still helps and is referred to during performing the ceremony by experts.

Plants as Cosmetics, Perfume, Incense

Plants have been part of body ornamentation and used as cosmetics, perfumes and incense material since time immemorial (Jain 2021). A list of the plants mentioned in various *Puranas* for these purposes is given in Table 1. It was revealed on further analysis that the highest number of plants were employed to make incense (25.8%) followed by perfume (22.58%), fragrant oil (19.35%) and fragrant powder (16.12%).

Table 1: List of plants mentioned for cosmetics, Perfume, and Incense in *Puranas* (Based on Sensarma 1989)

Sl. No.	Plant name in Purana	Botanical Name and Family	Name of Purana*	Uses as mentioned in Purana
1	<i>Aguru</i>	<i>Aquilaria malaccensis</i> Lam. (Thymelaeaceae)	AP, BP	Perfume
2	<i>Amalaka, Amalaki</i>	<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> L. (Phyllanthaceae)	BvP	Fruits for making fragrant bathing oil
3	<i>Campaka</i>	<i>Magnolia champaca</i> (L.) Baill. ex Pierre. (Magnoliaceae)	BvP	Garland for <i>Krsna</i>
4	<i>Candana</i>	<i>Santalum album</i> L. (Santalaceae)	VmP, BP	Perfume
5	<i>Ela</i>	<i>Elettaria cardamomum</i> Maton (Zingiberaceae)	AP	Fragrant chewing powder
6	<i>Gandhapatra</i>	<i>Paederia foetida</i> L. (Rubiaceae)	AP	Fragrant oil
7	<i>Guggula</i>	<i>Commiphora wightii</i> Bhandari (Burseraceae)	AP	Incense
8	<i>Harenuka</i>	<i>Vitex agnus-castus</i> L. (Lamiaceae)	AP	Fragrant powder
9	<i>Kamkola</i>	<i>Dillenia pentagyna</i> Roxb. (Dilleniaceae)	AP	Fragrant chewing powder
10	<i>Karpura</i>	<i>Cinnamomum camphora</i> Labile (Lauraceae)	BvP	Scenting of <i>Tambula</i>
11	<i>Kola</i>	<i>Piper longum</i> L. (Piperaceae)	AP	Fragrant oil
12	<i>Kumkuma</i>	<i>Crocus sativus</i> L. (Iridaceae)	BP, BvP	Perfume, Incense
13	<i>Kunduru</i>	<i>Boswellia serrata</i> Roxb. (Burseraceae)	AP	Incense
14	<i>Kustha</i>	<i>Hellena speciosa</i> S. R. Dutta (Costaceae)	AP	Perfume, Incense
15	<i>Laksa</i>	<i>Butea monosperma</i> Taub. (Fabaceae)	AP	Incense
16	<i>Lavanga</i>	<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i> Merr. & L.M. Perry (Myrtaceae)	AP	Fragrant chewing powder
17	<i>Malati</i>	<i>Aganosma dichotoma</i> K. Schum. (Apocynaceae)	BvP, AP	Flower garland as ornament of <i>Radha, Samkhachuda, Krsna</i> ; Flower garland to beautify coiffures of <i>Laxmi, Radha</i> and crown of <i>Krsna</i>
18	<i>Mamsi</i>	<i>Nardostachys jatamansi</i> DC. (Caprifoliaceae)	AP	Incense
19	<i>Manjistha</i>	<i>Rubia tinctorum</i> L. (Rubiaceae)	AP	Fragrant oil
20	<i>Musta</i>	<i>Cyperus rotundus</i> L. (Poaceae)	AP	Fragrant powder
21	<i>Padma</i>	<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i> Gaertn. (Nelumbonaceae)	BvP	Fragrance for bed; Garland for <i>Krsna</i>
22	<i>Parijata</i>	<i>Nyctanthes arbor-tristis</i> L. (Oleaceae)	BvP, BP	Flower garland as ornament of <i>Radha, Samkhachuda, Krsna</i> ; Flower garland for decorating coiffure of women
23	<i>Rakta Candana</i>	<i>Pterocarpus santalinus</i> L. (Fabaceae)	VmP, AP	Perfume
24	<i>Saileya</i>	<i>Parmotrema perlatum</i> Choisy (Parmeliaceae)	AP	Bathing article

25	<i>Sarala</i>	<i>Pinus longifolia</i> L. (Pinaceae)	AP	Incense
26	<i>Tagara</i>	<i>Tabernaemontana divaricata</i> R.Br. ex Roem. & Schult. (Apocynaceae)	AP	Fragrant oil
27	<i>Tambula</i>	<i>Piper betle</i> L. (Piperaceae)	BvP	Leaves for enjoyment of Kings
28	<i>Usira</i>	<i>Pseudoraphis spinescens</i> (R.Br.) Vickery (Poaceae)	AP	Perfume
29	<i>Vala</i>	<i>Sida cordifolia</i> L. (Malvaceae)	AP	Incense
30	<i>Visnukranta</i>	<i>Evolvulus alsinoides</i> L. (Convolvulaceae)	AP	Perfume
31	<i>Vyaghranakha</i>	<i>Martynia annua</i> L. (Martyniaceae)	AP	Fragrant oil

* AP: *Agni Purana*; BP: *Brahma Purana*; BvP: *Brahma Vaivarta Purana*; Vmp: *Vamana Purana*

Agni Purana mentions mixture of plants e.g. fruits of *Ela*, *Lavanga*, *Kamkola*, *Jati*, *Nisakara* with leaves of *Jati* to make a fragrant chewing material for buccal cavity and plants as bathing articles for the beautification of the body e.g. *Kumkuma*, *Tagara*, *Saileya*, *Kranta*, *Karpura*, *Mamsi*, *Mura* and *Kustha*. Further, the recipe of a fragrant powder is described which contains a mixing of leaves and flowers of *Jati* with *Karpura*, *Kumkuma*, *Kranta*, *Mrgadarpa*, *Harenuka*, *Kamkola*, *Ela*, *Lavanga*, *Kosaka* (A variety of Sugarcane), *Musta* and *Kasturika* (Musk). It is interesting to observe that writers of *Puranas* had ample knowledge about aromatic plants of the entire country along with their processing methodology and therefore, *Puranas* could be called as some early written pieces of evidence of cultural man-plant relationships. Most of these plants like *Candana*, *Guggula*, *Kumkuma*, *Kunduru*, *Kustha*, *Mamsi*, *Manjistha*, *Musta*, *Rakta Candana*, *Usira*, *Visnukranta* are frequently employed today for the uses as mentioned in *Puranas* and also used after value addition such as making fragrant soaps, incense sticks and for making perfumes.

Undoubtedly, *Puranas* are a rich treatise of ancient Indian culture and depict many aspects of human life and its association with the surrounding environment. It is important to mention that status of some plant species at present is still as same as described in *Puranas* for example, *Tulsi* is a revered plant in almost all Hindu communities whereas *Lasuna* is prohibited for the *Shradha* ceremony and is not considered auspicious for doing any good work even today. Moreover, many other uses have been added by the people to the plants which have not been considered suitable for a socio-cultural ritual for example *Ghrtakumari* which is unfit for the *Shradha* ceremony; is used for its various medicinal properties nowadays. Various studies on *Puranic* plants such as those of Sikarwar *et al.* (2015) have shown that many more new uses of *Puranic* plants have been added by local folk in due course of time and new dimensions have been given to the utilization of plant diversity growing in their regions. It further demonstrates the continuity of keen observation and dynamism in ethnobotanical knowledge. A large number (170) of different plant species were used in various socio-cultural events, rituals, ceremonies etc. during the era of *Puranas*. Detailed analysis of each of these plant species for uses as mentioned in *Puranas* in the context of present-day uses will throw more light on socio-cultural wisdom inscribed in Indian *Puranas*.

Bibliography

Dash SS, Jain V and Jain SK 2015. Notable name changes in plants of Indian Puranas. *Nelumbo* 57:82-85.

Jain SK and Jain V 2017. *Methods and Approaches in Ethnobotany (Concepts, Practices and Prospects)*. New Delhi: Deep Publications.

- Jain SK 2005. Dynamism in ethnobotany. *Ethnobotany* 17:3–13.
- Jain V and Jain SK 2016. *Compendium of Indian Folk Medicine and Ethnobotany (1991-2015)*. New Delhi: Deep Publications.
- Jain V, Nath M, Chauhan N and Jain SK 2015. Taxonomic and Phytogeographic aspects of Plants of Indian Puranas. *Phytotaxonomy* 15:152-165.
- Jain V 2021. Some Non-timber forest products in beauty care. In: *Medicinal Plants Herbal Wealth of India* (Ed.: Sharma, I. R.), pp. 15-29, Jodhpur, India: Agrobios Research.
- Nath M and Jain SK 2015. Some medicinal plants of Indian Purānas in today's ethnomedicinal perspective. *Indian J Hist Sci* 50 (2):196-207.
- Nath M, Jain V and Jain SK 2015. Non-timber plant species of Indian Puranas in the life of rural southern Assam. *MFP Newsletter* 25(3):7-12.
- Niroula G and Singh NB 2015. Religion and conservation: A review of use and protection of sacred plants and animals in Nepal. *J Inst Sci Technol* 20(2):61-66.
- Sahoo S, Ramesh DB, Panda PK and Misra VN 2002. *Plant Resources Utilization*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd.,
- Sensarma P 1989. *Plants in the Indian Puranas – An Ethnobotanical investigation*. Calcutta: Naya Prakash.
- Sikarwar RLS, Chandra V and Jain SK 2015. Present economic relevance of some non-timber species mentioned in Indian Puranas. *Int J Forest Usufruct Manag.* 16(2):12-21.
- Sugiyama MS 2001. Food, foragers and folklore: the role of narrative in human subsistence. *Evol Human Behav.* 22:221-240.
- The Wealth of India, Raw Materials*. 1948-76. Vol. I- XI, New Delhi: Publications & Information Directorate, CSIR.
- Website 1. <https://powo.science.kew.org/> (Accessed 11 August 2022).
- Website 2. <http://www.britishlichensociety.org.uk> (Accessed 21 December 2018).
- Website 3. The Data Base of Ethno-medicines in the World. <https://ethmed.toyama-wakan.net/> (Accessed 20 November 2018).
- Website 4. ENVIS Centre on Medicinal Plants. <http://envis.frlht.org/plantdetails/> (Accessed 20 December 2018).
- Wertsch JV 2000. Narratives as Cultural Tools in Sociocultural Analysis: Official History in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia. *Ethos.* 28(4):511–533.

Appendix A: Scientific names of plants mentioned in *Puranas* for socio-cultural rituals

Sl. No.	Plant name mentioned in Puranas	Botanical Name	Family
1	*Abhyanjana		
2	Alavu	<i>Lagenaria lagenaria</i> Cockerell	Cucurbitaceae
3	Amra	<i>Mangifera indica</i> L.	Anacardiaceae
4	Amrataka	<i>Spondias pinnata</i> (L.f.) Kurz.	Anacardiaceae
5	Anjana	<i>Memecylon umbellatum</i> Burm.f.	Melastomaceae
6	Apamarga	<i>Achyranthes aspera</i> L.	Amaranthaceae
7	Arka	<i>Calotropis gigantea</i> W.T. Aiton	Apocynaceae
8	Asoka	<i>Saraca asoca</i> (Roxb.) W.J. de Wilde	Fabaceae
9	Asvattha	<i>Ficus religiosa</i> L.	Moraceae
10	Atarusa	<i>Justicia</i> sp.	Acanthaceae
11	Atimukta, Malati	<i>Aganosma dichotoma</i> K.Schum.	Apocynaceae
12	Bala	<i>Sida acuta</i> Burm.f.	Malvaceae
13	*Balbaja		
14	Balbija, Rajika	<i>Eleusine coracana</i> Gaertn.	Poaceae
15	*Barbara		
16	Bhandira	<i>Populus euphratica</i> Olivier	Salicaceae
17	*Bharunda		
18	Bhustrna	<i>Cymbopogon citratus</i> (DC.) Stapf.	Poaceae
19	Canaka	<i>Cicer arietinum</i> L.	Fabaceae
20	*Cukra		
21	Dadimba	<i>Punica granatum</i> L.	Punicaceae
22	Darbha, Kusa	<i>Desmostachya bipinnata</i> (L.) Stapf.	Poaceae
23	Devadaru	<i>Cedrus deodara</i> G.Don	Pinaceae
24	Dhustura, Datura	<i>Datura</i> spp.	Solanaceae
25	Durva	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> Pers.	Poaceae
26	*Gandhapatala		
27	Ghrtakumari	<i>Aloe vera</i> Burm.f.	Asphodelaceae
28	Godhuma	<i>Triticum aestivum</i> L.	Poaceae
29	*Granthiparni		
30	Grnjana	<i>Lannea coromandelica</i> (Houtt.) Merr.	Anacardiaceae
31	*Haricandana		
32	Hingu	<i>Ferula narthex</i> Boiss	Apiaceae
33	Iksu, Iksa	<i>Saccharum officinarum</i> L.	Poaceae
34	Indivara, Kumuda, Utpala	<i>Nymphaea lotus</i> L.	Nymphaeaceae
35	Ingudi	<i>Balanites aegyptiaca</i> (L.) Delile	Simaroubaceae
36	Japa, Java	<i>Hibiscus rosa-sinensis</i> L.	Malvaceae
37	Jati	<i>Jasminum grandiflorum</i> L.	Oleaceae
38	Kadamba	<i>Neolamarckia cadamba</i> (Roxb.) Bosser	Rubiaceae
39	Kahlara	<i>Nuphar lutea</i> (L.) Sm.	Nymphaeaceae
40	Kaleya	<i>Albizia odoratissima</i> Benth.	Fabaceae
41	*Kalingottha		
42	*Kalpapadapa		

43	<i>Kapiththa</i>	<i>Limonia acidissima</i> L.	Rutaceae
44	<i>Karavi, Karavira</i>	<i>Nerium oleander</i> L.	Apocynaceae
45	<i>Karkandhu</i>	<i>Ziziphus oenopolia</i> Mill.	Rhamnaceae
46	<i>Karkandhu, Vadara</i>	<i>Ziziphus jujuba</i> Mill.	Rhamnaceae
47	<i>Kaseruka</i>	<i>Cyperus esculentus</i> L.	Cyperaceae
48	<i>Ketaki, Keturat</i>	<i>Pandanus odorifer</i> Kuntze.	Pandanaceae
49	<i>Khadira, Kramuka</i>	<i>Senegalia catechu</i> P.J.H. Hurter & Mabb.	Fabaceae
50	<i>Kharjura</i>	<i>Phoenix sylvestris</i> Roxb.	Arecaceae
51	<i>Kirata, Bhu-nimba</i>	<i>Andrographis paniculata</i> Nees.	Acanthaceae
52	<i>Kodrava</i>	<i>Paspalum scrobiculatum</i> L.	Poaceae
53	<i>Koradusaka</i>	<i>Heynea trijuga</i> Roxb.	Meliaceae
54	<i>Kovidara</i>	<i>Bauhinia</i> spp.	Fabaceae
55	* <i>Kranta</i>		
56	<i>Ksira</i>	<i>Plumeria rubra</i> L.	Apocynaceae
57	* <i>Kubjaka</i>		
58	<i>Kukkuti</i>	<i>Celosia argentea</i> L.	Amaranthaceae
59	<i>Kunda</i>	<i>Jasminum multiflorum</i> Andrews	Oleaceae
60	<i>Kuruntaka Kurundaka</i>	<i>Barleria prionitis</i> L.	Acanthaceae
61	<i>Kuruvinda, Masa</i>	<i>Vigna mungo</i> (L.) Hepper	Fabaceae
62	<i>Kusmanda</i>	<i>Benincasa hispida</i> (Thunb.) Cogn.	Cucurbitaceae
63	* <i>Kusodaka</i>		
64	<i>Kustamvuru</i>	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i> L.	Apiaceae
65	<i>Kusumbha</i>	<i>Schleichera oleosa</i> Merr.	Sapindaceae
66	* <i>Kuvjaka</i>		
67	<i>Lakuca</i>	<i>Artocarpus lakoocha</i> Buch.	Moraceae
68	<i>Lasuna</i>	<i>Allium sativum</i> L.	Amayllidaceae
69	<i>Lodhra</i>	<i>Symplocos racemosa</i> Roxb.	Symplocaceae
70	<i>Mallika</i>	<i>Jasminum sambac</i> (L.) Aiton.	Oleaceae
71	<i>Manakanda</i>	<i>Alocasia macrorrhizos</i> G.Don	Araceae
72	<i>Mandara</i>	<i>Erythrina variegata</i> L.	Fabaceae
73	<i>Marica</i>	<i>Capsicum annuum</i> L.	Solanaceae
74	* <i>Markata</i>		
75	<i>Masura</i>	<i>Lens culinaris</i> Medik.	Fabaceae
76	<i>Mrdvika, Draksa</i>	<i>Vitis vinifera</i> L.	Vitaceae
77	* <i>Mrgadarpa</i>		
78	<i>Mudga</i>	<i>Vigna radiata</i> (L.) R. Wilczek	Fabaceae
79	* <i>Mura</i>		
80	<i>Nagara</i>	<i>Cyperus javanicus</i> Houtt.	Cyperaceae
81	* <i>Nalika</i>		
82	<i>Naranga</i>	<i>Citrus aurantium</i> L.	Rutaceae
83	<i>Narikela</i>	<i>Cocos nucifera</i> L.	Arecaceae
84	<i>Nila</i>	<i>Indigofera tinctoria</i> L.	Fabaceae
85	<i>Nimba</i>	<i>Azadirachta indica</i> A.Juss.	Meliaceae
86	* <i>Nisakara</i>		
87	<i>Nispava</i>	Collective name of Pulses	

88	<i>Paarusaka</i>	<i>Grewia asiatica</i> L.	Tiliaceae
89	<i>Padma, Pankaj, Pundarika, Ambuj, Kamala, Kokanada, Satpatra</i>	<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i> Gaertn.	Nelumbonaceae
90	<i>Palam</i>	<i>Spinacia oleracea</i> L.	Amaranthaceae
91	<i>Palandu</i>	<i>Allium cepa</i> L.	Amaryllidaceae
92	<i>Palasa, Kimsuka</i>	<i>Butea monosperma</i> (Lam.) Taub.	Fabaceae
93	<i>Panirata</i>	<i>Carissa carandas</i> L.	Apocynaceae
94	<i>Patala</i>	<i>Stereospermum chelonoides</i> DC.	Bignoniaceae
95	<i>Patola</i>	<i>Trichosanthes dioica</i> Roxb.	Cucurbitaceae
96	<i>Phanisa</i>	<i>Quercus glauca</i> Thunb.	Fagaceae
97	<i>Pindalu</i>	<i>Mallotus nudiflorus</i> Kulju & Welzen	Euphorbiaceae
98	* <i>Pindamulaka</i>		
99	<i>Pippali</i>	<i>Piper longum</i> L.	Piperaceae
100	<i>Priyala</i>	<i>Buchanania cochinchinensis</i> (Lour.) M.R.Almeida	Anacardiaceae
101	<i>Priyangu</i>	<i>Aglaia odoratissima</i> Blume	Meliaceae
102	* <i>Purusalva</i>		
103	<i>Rajamasa</i>	<i>Vigna unguiculata</i> Walp.	Fabaceae
104	* <i>Raktavana</i>		
105	<i>Rambha</i>	<i>Musa paradisiaca</i> L.	Musaceae
106	<i>Saka</i>	<i>Tectona grandis</i> L. f.	Lamiaceae
107	<i>Sala</i>	<i>Shorea robusta</i> Gaertn.	Dipterocarpaceae
108	<i>Sami</i>	<i>Prosopis cineraria</i> (L.) Druce	Fabaceae
109	* <i>Santana</i>		
110	<i>Sarsapa</i>	<i>Brassica juncea</i> (L.) Czern.	Brassicaceae
111	<i>Satapuspa</i>	<i>Anethum sowa</i> Roxb. ex Fleming	Apiaceae
112	<i>Sephalika, Parijata</i>	<i>Nyctanthes arbor-tristis</i> L.	Oleaceae
113	<i>Sindhuvaraka</i>	<i>Vitex negundo</i> L.	Lamiaceae
114	<i>Sivajata</i>	<i>Cardiospermum halicacabum</i> L.	Sapotaceae
115	<i>Srngataka</i>	<i>Trapa natans</i> var. <i>bispinosa</i> Makino	Onagraceae
116	* <i>Sringavari</i>		
117	<i>Sukragandha</i>	<i>Voacanga</i> sp.	Apocynaceae
118	<i>Sundari</i>	<i>Heritiera fomes</i> Buch.-Ham.	Malvaceae
119	* <i>Svarasa</i>		
120	<i>Syamaka</i>	<i>Echinochloa colona</i> Link.	Poaceae
121	<i>Tamala</i>	<i>Garcinia xanthochymus</i> Hook.f. ex T. Anderson	Clusiaceae
122	<i>Tanduleya</i>	<i>Amaranthus spinosus</i> L.	Amaranthaceae
123	<i>Tila</i>	<i>Sesamum indicum</i> L.	Pedaliaceae
124	<i>Tilaka</i>	<i>Wendlandia heynei</i> Santapau & Merchant	Rubiaceae
125	<i>Tulsi, Tulasi</i>	<i>Ocimum tenuiflorum</i> L.	Lamiaceae
126	<i>Udumbara</i>	<i>Ficus racemosa</i> L.	Moraceae
127	* <i>Upkama</i>		
128	<i>Vakula</i>	<i>Mimusops elengi</i> L.	Sapotaceae
129	* <i>Vana</i>		
130	* <i>Vandhujiva</i>		
131	<i>Vandhuka</i>	<i>Pentapetes phoenicea</i> L.	Malvaceae

132	<i>Varana, Varuna</i>	<i>Crateva religiosa</i> G. Forst.	Capparaceae
133	<i>Vartaka</i>	<i>Solanum melongena</i> L.	Solanaceae
134	* <i>Vartaku</i>		
135	<i>Vatsaka</i>	<i>Holarrhena pubescens</i> Wall. ex G. Don	Apocynaceae
136	<i>Vibhitaka</i>	<i>Terminalia bellirica</i> Roxb.	Combretaceae
137	<i>Vidari</i>	<i>Ipomoea digitata</i> L.	Convolvulaceae
138	<i>Vijapura</i>	<i>Citrus medica</i> L.	Rutaceae
139	<i>Vikamkata</i>	<i>Flacourtia indica</i> (Burm.f.) Merr.	Flacourtiaceae
140	<i>Vilva</i>	<i>Aegle marmelos</i> (L.) Correa	Rutaceae
141	* <i>Visakanda</i>		
142	<i>Vrihi, Dhanya, Nivara</i>	<i>Oryza sativa</i> L. and its varieties	Poaceae
143	<i>Yava</i>	<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> L.	Poaceae
144	<i>Yuthika</i>	<i>Jasminum auriculatum</i> Vahl.	Oleaceae

*Unidentified plant species