



Role of Exotic Plants In Worship of Lord Shiva

Patil D.A.

Post-Graduate Department of Botany

S.S.V.P.S's L.K.Dr.P.R.Ghogrey Science College, Dhule-424005

(Maharashtra)

(Former Professor & Principal)

Abstract

India is regarded cultural cradle of biodiversity. Relationships of mankind, whether concrete or abstract, are multifarious. Man always leads both material and spiritual life. His faith and beliefs are intertwined intricately with the plant world as well as his gods and goddesses. He finds divinity in plants or their parts and hence construe them useful as offerings to the deities. Lord Shiva is one of the trinity of Hindu gods, and worshipped on many specific occasions by them. Indian research workers documented many plant species or botanicals as offering during worships of Lord Shiva. The present author reviewed only exotic plant species associated with Lord Shiva's worships. As many as 38 exotic plants species turned out belonging to 33 genera and 22 families. They dicotyledonous taxa have, however, major role as compared to the monocotyledonous ones. These are cultivated (17 species) or wild (18 species), two species being either wild or cultivated. The habital categories viz., trees, shrubs and herbs have nearly equal share. They belong to different continents, countries, islands or specific geographical regions of both Old and New Worlds. The distant continent viz., America has a major share. These results are discussed in the context of plant invasion in India, apart from religious significance.

Key Words: Lord Shiva, Exotic Plants, Bioinvasion, India.

Introduction

Lord Shiva, one of the Hindu trinity of gods, has several names such as Shankar, Shiva, Ashutosh, Neelkantha, Jatadhari, Pasupati, Bholyanatha, Viswanatha, Bajdyanath, Kailaspati, Tripurari, Rameshwar, Somnatha, Mahakal, Omkar, Nagesh, Trambakeshwar, Chidambaram, Kedarnath, Shambhu, Gauripati, Grijapati, Mahadeo, Umapati, Lingraj, Hara, Bambhola, Chandrashekhar, Maulishekhar, Shashankshekhar, etc. He is regarded supreme in bliss and knowledge. He is attentive to the devotees and a killer of their grief. He is, therefore, worshipped by Hindus. The ancient faith and beliefs are generally indicative of man-plant relationships. In India, amongst Hindu, many plant species are associated with religious rituals, functions and festivals. Lord Shiva's presence is noted in his worships by devotees, faith and beliefs of tribal and non-tribal

communities in India. The present paper is an attempt to analyse exotic elements of biodiversity associated with Lord Shiva.

Methodology

This account deals with exotic plant species as recorded by research workers in Ethnobotany. The plant species associated with the worship of Lord Shiva, a Hindu deity, are analysed for their exotic status consulting relevant taxonomic literature and mentioned against each species. Their status *w.r.t.* wild or cultivated and habit are also documented in Table-I. The data so accrued is analysed from the perspective of plant invasion in India, apart from their religious significance and utilities for material life in India.

Results & Discussion

Mankind has multifarious relationships with the vegetable kingdom. Broadly, these relationships can be categorized into two *viz.*, material and cultural or spiritual. Plants, their parts or products or formations like sacred groves (Devrai) associated intimately with faith, beliefs and traditions is now being considered under a new discipline *viz.*, 'Divine Botany' (*cf.* Jain and Kapoor, 2017). Such spiritual or divine relationships dates back to the appearance of mankind himself on the Blue Planet and his primeval life in forests. Although so, researches are not generally directed towards exhuming this relationships as it is desired to date. Earlier, the present author extended an in-depth survey of investigations and traditions about Lord Ganesh, a Hindu deity (Patil, 2022). The present attempt is now centered about another god *viz.*, Lord Shiva, one of the Hindu trinity of gods but with particular emphasis on exotic plant species associated with his worships.

Undoubtedly, India is a biodiverse nation and well acknowledged for its spiritual diversity. India is not simply a physical landmass but a vibrant and spiritually charged mass of land. It is truly cultural cradle of biodiversity. Various deities are worshipped by people of different castes, creed and religions. Lord Shiva is one such Hindu god worshipped all over the country. Some special worships e.g. Mahashivratri, Haritalika, Teej, etc. are observed routinely. A large number of temples in his name are found country-wide. Various plant species, their parts (leaves, flowers, fruits) are offered on these occasions. The present author intended to focus exotic plants species associated with worships of Lord Shiva. These have been tabulated in the Table-I. A total of 38 exotic species pertaining to 33 genera and 22 families of angiosperms have been recorded by the Indian research workers in the form of research articles or books. Of these, the dicotyledonous taxa played a major role as source of botanicals (34 species, 30 genera and 21 families) to be offered. Nevertheless, the monocotyledonous taxa have minor share (03 species, 03 genera and a single family). The habital analysis revealed various categories such as: trees (11), shrubs (12), herbs (14) and climber (01). The figures in parenthesis denote number of species employed. These are either found under cultivation (17 species), run wild in nature (19 species) or two species pertain to both of these status.

The plant taxa stated above are hailed from different continents, countries, islands, or specific geographical regions. Their nativities have been ascertained after consulting relevant taxonomic literary sources mentioned against each species (Table-I). Analysis of their nativities revealed diverse areas of both Old and New Worlds such as: America (12), Africa (08), Asia (Excl. India) (05), Europe (03), China (07), Mediterranean

region (03) and Japan (02). The figures in parenthesis stand for number of species. Apart from these, many other countries or regions contributed a single species e.g. Sri Lanka, West Indies, China, Cochin China, Persia, Armenia, Indonesia, Mexico, Middle East, Trinidad, Arab, Tropics, Paleotropics, Subtropical and Warm Temperate Zone. These plant species are brought in intentionally and as such found under cultivation. Initially, they appear introduced in Indian subcontinent as sources of food grains, edible fruits, vegetable, pulses, as shade trees or ornamentals. The then Indians have eventually appropriated these exotic plant species as offerings to various deities. The reasons or underlined principles for appropriations may be varied (cf. Patil, 2024b). However, there are certain exotic plant species (18 species) which are wild and are presently forming an integral segment on Indian biodiversity. These would have been introduced during various human activities, negligently or unintentionally. Plants species also disperse naturally, a common phenomenon worldwide. This may be the region for their occurrence in India (cf. Patil, 2020). This resume clear indicates that floristic composition in India has changed since long past. Plant invasion is thus intentioned or unintentional. The information so accrued can be employed while extending measures for biodiversity management and conservation in India.

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Table-I: Exotic Plants: Worship of Lord Shiva

Sr. No. (1)	Plant Species & Family (2)	Common Name (3)	Name of Worship (4)	Habit & Part Used (5)	Wild (W) / Cultigen(C) (6)	Reference (7)	Nativity & Reference (8)
1.	<i>Annona squamosa</i> L. Annonaceae	Sitaphal	Hartalika, Teej	Shrubs, Leaves	W, C	Jadhav, 2012	Tropical America: Patil, 2003
2.	<i>Barleria prionitis</i> L. Acanthaceae	Vajradanti	Hartalika, Teej, Lord Shiva Worship	Shrubs, Flowers	C	Jadhav, 2012; Pawar & Patil, 2008	Tropical Africa: Medakkar & Sharma, 2016c.
3.	<i>Calotropis gigantea</i> (L.) R.Br. Asclepiadaceae	Ankdo, Aak, Madara, Arka Rui	Mahashivratri, Hartalika, Shiv Puja, Teej	Shrubs, Leaves, Flowers	W	Jadhav, 2012, 2017; Sharma, 2019; Pandey & Pandey, 2016; Singh & Chauhan, 2004; Sood <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Ghate, 1998.	Tropical Africa: Reddy, 2008; Patil, 2017.
4.	<i>Calotropis procera</i> (Ait.) R.Br. Asclepiadaceae	Ankdo, Arka, Aak, Madar	Mahashivratri, Hartalika, Teej, Shivpuja, To appeal Mahadeva	Shrubs, Leaves, Flowers	W	Jadhav, 2012, 2017; Ahmed <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Singh & Chauhan, 2004; Sood <i>et al.</i> , 2005.	Tropical Africa: Reddy, 2008; Patil, 2017.

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5.	<i>Cannabis sativa</i> L. Cannabinaceae	Bhang	Mahashivratri, Shivratri Puja, Shivratri	Herbs, Leaves, Flowers, Entire, Plants	W	Jadhav, 2012; Sharma, 219; Singh & Chauhan, 2004.	(i) Central Asia: Chandra Sekar, 2012. (ii) Asia (Excl. India): Kaul, 1986.
6.	<i>Cicer arietinum</i> L. Papilionaceae	Chod	Mahashivratri	Herbs, Entire Plants	C	Jadhav, 2012.	(i) Mediterranean Region: Shetty & Singh, 1987. (ii) South Europe: Patil, 1990.
7.	<i>Crossandra infundibuliformis</i> (L.) Nees Acanthaceae	--	Hartalika, Teej	Shrubs, Flwoers	C	Jadhav, 2012	Sri Lanka: Gaikwad & Garad, 2014.
8.	<i>Datura metel</i> L. Solanaceae	Dhatura, Dattur	Mahashivratri, Hartalika, Teej, Lord Shiva Worship	Herbs, Fruits, Leaves	W	Jadhav, 2012; Ahmed <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Sharma, 2019; Sarma & Devi, 2015; Sood <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Ghate, 1998	Tropical America: Patil, 2017; Chandra Sekar, 2012.

Sr. No. (1)	Plant Species & Family (2)	Common Name (3)	Name of Worship (4)	Habit & Part Used (5)	Wild (W) / Cultigen(C) (6)	Reference (7)	Nativity & Reference (8)
9.	<i>Datura stramonium</i> L. Solanaceae	Andhijado, Dhatura	Mahashivratri, Hartalika, Teej, Lord Shiva Worship	Herbs, Flowers, Fruits, Leaves	W	Jadhav, 2012, 2017; Sood <i>et al.</i> , 2005	Tropical America: Chandra Sekar, 2012.
10.	<i>Ipomoea carnea</i> Jacq. Subsp. <i>fistulosa</i> (Mart. Ex Choisy) Austin Convolvulaceae	Nashedi	Hartalika, Teej	Shrubs, Leaves	W	Jadhav, 2012	(i) Tropical America & Mexico: Reddy, 2008. (ii) South America: Yadav & Sardesai, 2002.
11.	<i>Psidium guajava</i> L. Myrtaceae	Jamphal	Hartalika, Teej	Trees, Fruits, Leaves	C	Jadhav, 2012	(i) Tropical America: Patil, 2003. (ii) Mexico: Shetty & Singh, 1987.
12.	<i>Cascabella thevetia</i> (L.) Lippold [Syn. <i>Thevetia</i> <i>peruviana</i> (Pers.) Merr.] Apocynaceae	Pilikaner	Hartalika, Teej	Trees, Flowers	C	Jadhav, 2012	(i) South America & West Indies: Patil, 2003. (ii) Tropical America: Singh <i>et al.</i> , 1991. (iii) South Europe: Backer & Brink, 1963.
13.	<i>Ziziphus mauritiana</i> Lam. Rhamnaceae	Bor	Mahashivratra	Trees, Fruits	C	Jadhav, 2012	Sri Lanka: Gaikwad & Garad, 2015.

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14.	<i>Acacia nilotica</i> (L.) Del. ssp. <i>indica</i> (Bth.) Brenan Mimosaceae	Kinkirat	Lord Shiva Worship	Trees, Flwoers	W	Jadhav, 2017	North Africa & Arab: Rajagopal & Panigrahi, 1965.
15.	<i>Clitorea ternatea</i> L. Papilionaceae	Aparajita, Asphota, Girishalini	Lord Shiva Worship	Climbers, Flowers	W,C	Jadhav, 2017	Tropical America: Purseglove, 1968.
16.	<i>Hibiscus rosa-sinensis</i> L. Malvaceae	Adhul, Japakusum	Lord Shiva Worship	Shrubs, Flowers	C	Jadhav, 2017	China: Patil, 2003.
17.	<i>Leucas cephalotes</i> (Roth.) Spreng. Lamiaceae	Drona, Guma	Lord Shiva Worship	Herbs, Flwoers	W	Jadhav, 2017	South Africa: Sheikh & Dixit, 2017.
18.	<i>Nerium indicum</i> Mill. Apocynaceae	Kaner, Karveer, Kanher	Lord Shiva Worship	Shrubs, Flowers, Leaves	C	Jadhav, 2017; Ghate, 1998; Sood <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Sharma, 2019	(i) Mediterranean Region: Purseglove, 1968. (ii) China, Cochin China: Voight, 1845.
19.	<i>Nymphaea nouchali</i> Burm. f. Nymphaeaceae	Neelkamal	Lord Shiva Worship	Herbs, Flowers	W	Jadhav, 2017	(i) South-East Asia: Shetty & Singh, 1987. (ii) China: Medakkar & Sharma, 2016c.

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20.	<i>Prosopis cineraria</i> (L.) Druce Mimosaceae	Shami	Lord Shiva Worship	Trees, Flowers	W	Jadhav, 2017	Tropical America: Naik, 1998.
21.	<i>Rosa centifolia</i> L. Rosaceae	Gulab, Kabjak	Lord Shiva Worship	Shrubs, Flowers	C	Jadhav, 2017	Eastern Caucasus, Armenia & Persia: Hurst & Breeze, 1922.
22.	<i>Saccharum spontaneum</i> L. Poaceae	Kas, Kash, Kans	Lord Shiva Worship	Herbs, Flowers	W	Jadhav, 2017	Tropical West Asia: Reddy, 2008; Patil, 2017.
23.	<i>Sesbania grandiflora</i> (L.) Poir. Papilionaceae	Agastya, Hadga	Lord Shiva Worship	Trees, Flowers	C	Pawar & Patil, 2008, 2010; Jadhav, 2017; Sood <i>et al.</i> , 2005	Indonesia: Patil, 1995; Shetty & Singh, 1987.
24.	<i>Solanum anguivi</i> Lamk. (Syn. <i>S.indicum</i> auct non L.) Solanaceae	Badikateri	Lord Shiva Worship	Herbs, Flowers	W	Jadhav, 2017	Africa: Patil, 2024a.
25.	<i>Vetiveria zizanoides</i> (L.) Nash. Poaceae	Khas	Lord Shiva Worship	Herbs, Flowers	W	Jadhav, 2017	China: Medakkar & Sharma, 2016b.

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26.	<i>Barleria cristata</i> (L.) Acanthaceae	Kate-Koranti	Hartalika	Shrubs, Flowers	C	Pawar & Patil, 2010	Paleotropical: Singh & Srivastava, 2000.
27.	<i>Datura innoxia</i> Mill. Solanaceae	Dhotra	Shiv Pooja, Offering on Lingam	Herbs, Flowers, Fruits	W	Pawar & Patil, 2008, 2010; Sood <i>et al.</i> , 2005.	(i) North-South America: Stewart, 1942. (ii) Tropical America: Reddy, 2005; Patil, 2017.
28.	<i>Crataeva magna</i> (Lour.) DC. Capparidaceae	Barna	Shivratri Pooja	Trees, Leaves	C	Singh & Chauhan, 2004.	Tropical Africa: Medakkar & Sharma, 2016a.
29.	<i>Bauhinia variegata</i> L. Caesalpiniaceae	Kachnar	Shiv Pooja	Trees, Flowers	C	Singh & Chauhan, 2004; Krishna & Amirthalingam, 2014.	China: Debnath & Debnath, 2017.
30.	<i>Achyranthes aspera</i> L. Amaranthaceae	Apamarg, Aghada, Chirchira	Shiv Pooja, Hartalika	Herbs, Leaves	W	Ghate, 1998; Sood <i>et al.</i> , 2005.	Tropics: Medakkar & Sharma 2016a.
31.	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> (L.) Pers. Poaceae	Durvankur, Durva	Shiv Pooja, Lord Shiva Worship	Herbs, Leaves	W	Ghate, 1998; Sood, <i>et al.</i> , 2005.	Tropical Africa: Debnath & Debnath, 2017.

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32.	<i>Rosa damascena</i> Mill. Rosaceae	Shatapatra, Gulab	Shiv Pooja	Shrubs, Flowers	C	Ghate, 1998.	(i) East Asia: Patil, 2003. (ii) Middle East: Gaikwad & Garad, 2015. (iii) Japan & China: Biswas, 1940.
33.	<i>Artemisia milagirica</i> (C.B.Cl.) Pamp. Asterceae	--	Lord Shiva Pooja	Herbs, Dried Flowers	W	Sood <i>et al.</i> , 2005.	(i) Mediterranean Region: Singh <i>et al.</i> , 2015. (ii) America: Singh & Nigam, 2015.
34.	<i>Dendratherum indicum</i> (L.) Des. (Syn.Chysanthemum indicum Linn.) Asteraceae	Chevati	Lord Shiva Offering	Herbs, Flowering Heads	C	Sood <i>et al.</i> , 2005.	(i) Europe: Stewart, 1972. (ii) China & Japan: Yadav & Srivastava, 2002.
35.	<i>Couroupita guianensis</i> Aubl. Lecythidaceae	Naglingam, Shivlingi, Shivling, Shiv kamal	Lord Shiva Worship	Trees, Flowers	C	Sood <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Krishna & Amrithalingam, 2014.	(i) America: Sorenson, 2005. (ii) Trinidad & South-East America: Gaikwad & Garad, 2015.

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36.	<i>Jasminum sambac</i> Ait. Oleaceae	Mallika	Lord Shiva Worship	Shrubs, Flowers	C	Sood <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Krishna & Amirthalingam, 2014.	Tropical Asia: John, 1891; Patil, 2024a.
37.	<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i> Gaertn. Nelumbonaceae	Kanwal, Kamal, Padma	Lord Shiva Worship	Herbs, Flowers	W	Sood <i>et al.</i> , 2005.	Mexico: Medakkar & Sharma, 2016c.
38.	<i>Ziziphus jujuba</i> (L.) Gaertn. Rhamnaceae	Ber, Boyer, Borai	Lord Shiva Worship	Trees, Fruits	C	Sharma, 2019	Subtropics & Warm Temperate Zone: Martin <i>et al.</i> , 1987.

