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Marathi Proverbs in the context of Bioinvasion in Maharashtra State (India)

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Abstract

Proverbial expressions depict thoughts and character of the society, apart from their socio-economic status. Proverbs are indicative of customs, rites, rituals and prevailing myth. They are also amusing, rhythmic, humourous and advise on many aspects of human-life. It was possible to reveal exotic plant species intercalated in the Marathi proverbs. A total of 25 exotic plant species belonging to 24 genera and 17 angiospermic families are revealed after critical examination of proverbs. Thus are either dicotyledons or monocotyledons. The former played a major role in bioinvasion in the state Maharashtra as compared to the latter ones. They are cultivated (20 species), wild (04 species) or a single species being both a cultigen or runs wild in nature. Majority of plant taxa are herbaceous (20 species) and as such have a dominant role in bioinvasion. This realm of research have yet remained largely neglected and await for better information for the welfare of mankind. The data so accrued is also used while embarking upon biodiversity management and conservation in the region. More systematic efforts on this line of scientific pursuits are however needed.

Key Words: Marathi Proverbs, Maharashtra, Plant Invasion.

Introduction

India is well-known for its diversities regarding cultural, culinary, curative and ecosystem. Plant world was studied with more emphasis on medicinal utilities. Later on, both aspects separated from each other. The development plant science particularly after 16th century, was geared up and modern plant science (Botany) emerged on sound footings of enquiry and research. In ancient India, plant science was interwoven with myths and beliefs since Vedic period. It then progressed gradually with the studies on medicinal plants and culminated into an Indian system of medicine, the Ayurveda. Rational elements of plant science are notable in Parasara's Vrikshayurveda (c*f.* Patil, 2021)[20] but the mission was not carried further. The science of 'Ethnobotany' is started in last few decades in India with holistic approach. The man-plant relationships is divided into two compartments of enquiry. The concrete relationship has been geared up tremendously in India. Nevertheless, the abstract relationship has remained underexplored which reflects plants interwoven with folk song, tales, proverbs, etc. As far as proverbs are concerned very few publications are on record those of Jain (1996)[7], Joshi (1995)[9], Singh and Pandey (1998)[31], Jain and Mudgal (1999)[8], Agrawal (1981)[1], Pareek and Trivedi (2014)[15], Rao (2021)[23], Rao and Rao (2021)[24]. Secondly, these attempts focused plants from ethnobotanical perspective. The present author initiated his study on Marathi proverbs in context of plant invasion in India, the results of which are being presented in this account.

Methodology

The present author being conversant with Marathi, state language of Maharashtra (India), could collect some proverbs in last few years. Apart from these, other literary sources are also of some help in this regard (Manwaring, 1899; Hardare, 2023; Inamdar, 2022)[12,5,6]. Proverbs are most times intercalated with some local plant names. The plant species were determined using regional, state and district floras (Cooke, 1958; Sharma *et al.*, 1996; Singh *et al.*, 2000-2001; Naik, 1998; Patil, 2003 and Kshirsagar and Patil, 2008)[3,26,29,12,17,11]. However, only exotic plant

species are considered for the present communication. Their exotic status was also determined using relevant taxonomic literature as mentioned against each species. The proverbs are spelt in English alphabets followed by botanical name, its exotic status and relevant meaning or theme conceived from the proverbs. The local Marathi plant name is underlined.

Systematic Enumeration

. Kanda Ani Mardacha Bandha:
Bot.Name : *Allium cepa* L.(Liliaceae)
Meaning : Kanda: Onion; Stout and plumpy man is just like an onion.
Nativity : Europe: Patil, 2003[17]; Naik, 1998[12].

. Malyachi Maka Va Kolhyache Bhandan:
Bot.Name : *Zea mays* L. (Poaceae)
Meaning : Maka: Maize, corn; Owner of maize (corn) is the farmer but jackals quarrel for it.
Nativity : America: Kshirsagar & Patil, 2008[11].

. Gavhsarase Kide Ragadale Jatat:
Bot.Name : *Triticum aestivum* L. (Poaceae)
Meaning : Gahu: Wheat; While grinding the wheat grains, insects are also crushed with them.
Nativity : Fertile Crescent: Patil, 2017[18]; Singh & Nigam, 2017[28].

. Nak Muthit Harbhare Otit:
Bot.Name : *Cicer arientinum* L. (Papilionaceae)
Meaning : Harbhare: Chickpea; Nose of someone is in his fist, but grains of chickpea are in his lap.
Nativity : Mediterranean Region: Shetty & Singh, 1987[27]; Patil, 2024[21].

. Kulidana Hoyat Manda Te Ka Radet Randa:
Bot.Name : *Macrotyloma uniflorum* (Lam.) Verdc. (Papilionaceae)
Meaning : Kulid: Horsegram. If manda (a sweet bread, roti or chapatti; a local food article) can be prepared from the grains of horsegram, then why the wives would cry.
Nativity : South-East Asia: Patil, 2019[19], 2024[21].

. Duganicha Mula Tin Paise Hel:
Bot.Name : *Raphanus sativus* L. (Brassicaceae)
Meaning : Mula: Radish. Radish can be purchased at low price, then why to have more amount in hand.
Nativity : Europe & Temperate Asia: Patil, 1995[16].

. Bharale Pota Anjir Kadu:
Bot.Name : *Ficus carica* L. (Moraceae)
Meaning : Anjir: Fig; If stomach is full of food, then the figs too are bitter for him.
Nativity : Mediterranean Region: Gaikwad & Garad, 2015[4].

. Aphuchi Ghuti Aandhalyachi Mithi:
Bot.Name : *Papaver somniferum* L. (Papaveraceae):
Meaning : Aphu: Opium; If you consume opium pill, it is just like blind man's embrace. The grip of opium and blind man is always tenacious.
Nativity : Mediterannean Counries & Middle East: Shetty & Singh, 1987[27].

. Karadila Nahi Kida Va Bodakila Nahi Pida:
Bot.Name : *Carthamus tinctorius* L. (Asteraceae)
Meaning : Karadi: Safflower; Safflower can not be infected by insects and there is no evil for a widow.
Nativity : West Asia: Yadav & Sardesai, 2002[34].

0. Tadachi Savali Ghadichi Bai Ambyakhali Ubhi Rahi:
Bot.Name : (i) *Borassus flabellifer* L. (Arecaceae)
(ii) *Mangifera indica* L. (Anacardiaceae)
Meaning : Tad: Palmyra Palm; Amba: Mango; The shadow of a Palmyra palm lasts for a very short period, one should therefore stand or take shelter under a mango tree (The shadow of Mango is wider and last for a longer period).

Nativity : Tropical Africa: Reddy, 2008[25].

1. Tulashiche Mulat Kanda Lavu Naye:
   Bot.Name : (i) *Ocimum tenuiflorum* L. (Lamiaceae) (Syn.O.sanctum L.)
   (ii) *Allium cepa* L. (Liliaceae)
   Meaning : Tulashi: Sacred Bazil; Kanda: Onion; Tulashi (Sacred Basil) has religious sanctity (in Hindu Society) and therefore, we should plant a cultivate onion near to it (which is odourous).
   Nativity : (i) Northern Coastal Belt of Mediterranean Sea: Swamy, 1973[32].
   (ii) Europe: Patil, 2003[17].
2. Teradyacha Rang Tin Divas:
   Bot.Name : *Impatiens balsamina* L. (Balsaminaceae)
   Meaning : Terada: Balsam; Flower colour of Balsam lasts for a very short period.
   Nativity : Tropical America: Reddy, 2008[25]; Patil, 2024[21].
3. Nay, Nirgud Maka Aani Sarv Aushadhancha Kaka:
   Bot.Name : (i) *Enicostema axillare* (Lam.) Raynal (Gentianaceae).
   (ii) *Vitex negundo* Linn. (Verbenaceae).
   (iii) *Eclipta prostrata* (Linn.) Linn. (Asteraceae)
   Meaning : All these three plants are medicinal, which enable a man healthy.
   Nativity : (i) North China & Mongolia: Bailey, 1949[2].
   (ii) South & Tropical America: Reddy, 2008[25].
4. Phul Zenduche Garibaguribache:
   Bot.Name : *Tagetes erecta* L. (Asteraceae)
   Meaning : Zendu: Marigold; Flower of marigold are so common that any poor man can have it.
   Nativity : Mexico: Patil, 2003[17].
5. Babhalicha Kata Pudhe Tikhat Aani Mage Pochat:
   Bot.Name : *Vachellia nilotica* (L.) P.J.H. Hurter & Mabb. (Syn.Acacia nilotica (L.) Willd. var. indica Bth.)
   Meaning : Babul (Acacia) tree bears thorns which are sharp or pungent apically but not solid basally.
   Nativity : North Africa & Arab: Purseglove, 1968[22].
6. Raicha Hoto Parvat Aani Rankacha Hoto Rao:
   Bot.Name : *Brassica nigra* (L.) Koch. (Brasicaceae)
   Meaning : Rai (Mohari): Mustard; To make mountain out of a molehill. The molehill is compared with a seed of mustard. Poor man becomes rich and stalwart. The proverb is used when someone exaggerate any situation or a fact.
   Nativity : Europe: Naqshi & Javeid, 1987[14].
7. Ralyacha Thala Karane:
   Bot.Name : *Panicum miliaceum* L. (Poaceae)
   Meaning : Rala: Panic seed; To make a plate out of a Panic seeds (which is very small in size). The proverb is used when one exaggerate a situation or fact.
   Nativity : Asia (Excl. India): Kaul, 1986[10].
8. Ralyache Dhasale Aani Bhutane Tond Vasale:
   Bot.Name : *Panicum miliaceum* L. (Poaceae)
   Meaning : Rala: Panic seed; Dhasale: A food preparation made from Panic seeds. This food article is not so important one, but a demon still opens its mouth to consume it.
   Nativity : Asia (Excl. India): Kaul, 1986[10].
9. Haralichi Muli Kadhun Khudun Khavi:
   Bot.Name : *Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Pers. (Poaceae)
   Meaning : Harali: Dub grass; This grass species is very invasive and spreads very quickly covering maximum landmass. If you intend to remove it from the scene, then one should pluck its roots time and again.
   Nativity : Tropical Africa: Wagh & Jain, 2015[33].

0. Navara Baykoche Bhandan Aani Ralyache Kandan:
Bot.Name : *Panicum miliaceum* L. (Poaceae)
Meaning : Quarrel in between husband and wife is similar to pounding of Panic seeds. Their quarrel is quickly over as the ponding of Panic seeds takes no time.
Nativity : Asian (Excl.India): Kaul, 1986[10].

1. Gajarachi Chori Va Fasichi Shiksha:
Bot.Name : *Daucus carota* L. (Apiaceae)
Meaning : Gajar: Carrot; A big punishment of hanging for someone merely for theft of small things like carrot.
Nativity : Europe: Yadav & Sardesai, 2002[34].

2. Jevha Yete Vel Tevha Hote Gajarache Kel:
Bot.Name : (i) *Dacucus carota* L. (Apiaceae)
(ii) *Musa paradisiaca* L. (Musaceae)
Meaning : Gajar: Carrot; Kel: Plantain, Banana; Sometimes, carrot (which is less valued) is as good as banana. Thus, things of little worth have more value in hard times.
Nativity : Europe: Yadav & Sardesai, 2002[34].

3. Tadichya Zadakhali Jari Dudh Pyale Tari Tadicha Sansay Yeto:
Bot.Name : *Borassus flabellier* L. (Arecaceae)
Meaning : Tadi: Palmyro palm; Neera, a fermented drink is tapped from this tree. If someone says that, I drank milk, nobody will accept it. Instead, people raise doubt that he drank 'Neera', as he is sitting near this tree.
Nativity : Tropical Africa: Reddy, 2008[25].

4. Chana Kunacha, Makad Nacha:
Bot.Name : *Cicer arientinum* L. (Papilionaceae)
Meaning : Chana: Chickpea; Chickpea belongs to one but some other enjoys by dancing a monkey.
Nativity : Mediterranean Region: Shetty & Singh, 1987[27].

5. Awala Khaun Pani Pyava, Maheri Java; Gajar Khaun Pani Pyava Ani Sasari Java
Bot.Name : (i) *Phyllanthus emblica* L. (Euphorbiaceae)
(ii) *Daucus carota* L. (Apiaceae)
Meaning : Awala: Emblic myrobalan; Gajar: Carrot; If you chewed/ate emblic myrobalan and drink water, it tastes good. If you ate carrot, the taste is not good. The former case is compared as if a married woman goes to her father's home (village). The latter case is compared as if she goes to her husband's home (village). Relationships within two situations is pointed out[34].
Nativity : Europe: Yadav & Sardesai, 2002.

6. Yalala Kel, Vanvasala Sitaphal
Bot.Name : (i) *Musa paradisiaca* L. (Musaceae)
(ii) *Annona squamosa* L. (Annonaceae)
Meaning : Kel: Plantain, Banana; Sitaphal: Custard Apple. Banana fruit is better during favourable period. However, during exile or hardships, custard apple is also good.
Nativity : Tropical America & West Indies: Shetty & Singh, 1987[27].

7. Dhanyala Dhatura, Chorala Malida:
Bot.Name : *Datura innoxia* Mill. (Solanaceae):
Meaning : Dhatura: Thorn-apple; The owner is offered nothing but a theft is respected by offering him feast.
Nativity : Tropical America: Reddy, 2008[25]; Patil, 2024[21].

8. Shevgyacha Zadavar Chadhu Naye:
Bot.Name : *Moringa oleifera* Lamm. (Moringaceae)
Meaning : Shevaga: Drumstick; One should not climb the tree of drumstick. Its branches are delicate and break easily and one may fall down.
Nativity : America: Singh & Srivastava, 2000[30].

9. Puranatil Vangi Puranat:
Bot.Name : *Solanum melongena* L. (Solanaceae)
Meaning : Bringal, Egg-plant; Puran: Ancient Indian religious scriptures; Rites and rituals of past or ancient time are not applicable in modern period.
Nativity : (i) America: Gaikwad & Garad, 2015[4].
(ii) West Indies: Singh *et al.*, 2001[29].

Results and Discussion

There have been attempts in past to document traditional proverbs in Marathi which passed over generations orally. At least, some of the ancient proverbs in the state of Maharashtra are thereby preserved for next generations. This documentation was really essential due to fast rate of acculturation and dwindling biodiversity. The proverbs can not be traced to a single person. They are products of long-standing experiences of the concerned society .They can be natural, cultural, mythological and also mirror socio-economy of the ancient past. Mankind is surrounded by the plant-world and have more chances of integration with proverbs.

The present account especially focused the exotic plant species gleaned from the Marathi proverbs. These species are turned out to be exotic when examined through the relevant taxonomic literature. The main aim was to know plant species invaded in the state of Maharashtra. As many as 25 exotic plant species are divulged pertaining to 24 genera and 17 angiospermic families. Of these, dicotyledonous taxa have played a major role in invading the said region (19 species, 18 genera and 14 families), whereas the monocotyledonous one have a little share (06 species, 06 genera and 03 families). They are either cultivated (20 species) or run wild in nature (04 species), only a single species is both wild as well as a cultigen.

Each plant species was ascertained for its exotic status revealing their geographical place or origin. They are hailed from various continents, countries, islands or specific geographical regions such as: Europe, America and Asia (Exc. India) (06 species each), Africa (04 species), China, Mongolia, West Indies and Fertile crescent (01 species each). Majority of these are herbaceous taxa (20 species) and trees (05 species). Obviously, these have played a role in local economy being useful as fruit-yielding, oil-yielding, spices and condiments, vegetables, ornamental, medicinal, etc. Thus economy of a region is also mirrored by the proverbs.

The proverbs also play role in informing social status and its sustenance. Proverbs are also the best means of learning or explaining evidences interpolated in them. They inform native biodiversity and bioinvasion in the said region. This realm of research should be geared up to unlock the treasure of useful biodiversity as well invaded species can be thought of from the standpoint of management and conservation in the said region.

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