



Plantations As Evinced From Brihat Samhita In The Perspective of Vastushastra

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Abstract:

The ancient lexicon *viz.*, Brihat Samhita (6th Century AD.) authored by Varahamihira is investigated in the context of Vastushastra. Vastu-Shastra is thought an architectural science of Indian origin that help harmonize human life in relation to environment. Varahamihira explained good or bad omens through his proposals to plant certain species in or around houses. He proposed 15 plant species pertaining to 12 genera and 10 families of angiosperms. He also provided general principles for plantation in or vicinity of human dwellings. His experience, knowledge and wisdom is dilated in the perspective of Vastushastra in this communication with a goal of improving atmosphere in relation to mankind. The ancient literary Sanskrit scriptures are informative and provide data for positive science.

Key Words: Brihat Samhita, Plantation, Vastushastra, Beliefs.

Introduction

Plants are major and significant part of natural world and also important for the very life of biota including *Homo sapiens*. They are integral part of human culture and as such performed an essential role in every walk of human life. Since the birth of mankind, they have served every necessity of human life and are indispensable for his existence and prosperity. There is hardly any ancient Sanskrit literary works, whether Vedas, Epics, Puranas, Nighantus or Samhitas; which are not replete with the plant species (Patil, 2017, 2018, 2021a,b,c; 2024a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i; Sikarwar, 2021; Sensarma, 1989). These sources of ancient wisdom are store-house of information useful to mankind. Brihat Samhita (6th Century AD) is one such literary source which stand prominently in this regard and guides us in proper direction even in modern era. Brihat Samhita is authored by Varahamihira. He advised mankind about plant life and their perennation for human welfare against all environmental vigours. This lexicon is worth revealing the role of plants from the standpoint 'Vastushastra'.

The present account is an endeavour to limelight the information in this perspective and its importance in modern human life.

Methodology

The lexicon viz., Brihar Samhita, originally authored by Varahamihira (6th Century AD), is edited by Ramakrishna (1982). It is examined for the present communication. It contains information on various aspects of plant-world in Sanskrit. The present author noted some information in respect of plantation as mentioned by Varahmihira. It is translated lucidly indicating its importance even in the modern era. The contents are limelighted comparatively considering recent trends in India.

Systematic Enumeration:

(A) Planting Specific Trees And Directions:

1. (a) Nyagrodh: *Ficus racemosa* L. (Moraceae)
 (b) Udumbara: *Ficus racemosa* L. (Moraceae)
 (c) Pippala: *Ficus religiosa* L. (Moraceae)
 (d) Plaksha: *Ficus virens* Dryand (Moraceae)
 (i) Growing Nyagrodh (Banyan or Vata) tree in the east of one's house fulfills his all desires.
 (ii) Likewise, presence of Udumbara (Umbar) tree in the south, Pippala (Pimpal, Pipal) tree in the west and Plaksha (Pimpri) tree in the north of a house are thought productive of good (Verse-24).
2. (a) Asvattaha: *Ficus religiosa* L. (Moraceae)
 (b) Plaksha: *Ficus virens* Dryand (Moraceae)
 (c) Nyagrodh: *Ficus benghalensis* L. (Moraceae)
 (d) Udumbara: *Ficus racemosa* L. (Moraceae)
 Planting Asvattha (Pippala, Pimpal) in the east of one's house, Plaksh (Pimpri) in the south, Nyagrodh (Vata) in the west and Udumbara (Umbar) in the north should be avoided. This is to avoid bad omen (Verse-25).
3. (a) Badari: *Ziziphus jujuba* Mill. (Rhamnaceae)
 (b) Kadali: *Musa paradisiaca* L. (Musaceae)
 (c) Dadima: *Punica granatum* L. (Punicaceae)
 (d) Bijapuraka: *Citrus medica* Linn. (Rutaceae)
 The number of children would not increase if these grow in one's house (Verse-28).
4. (a) Palasa: *Butea monosperma* (Lamk.) Taub. (Papilionaceae)
 (b) Kanchana: *Bauhinia variegata* (L.) Benth. (Caesalpinaceae)
 (c) Slemantaka: *Cordia dichotoma* Forst. (Boraginaceae)
 (d) Karanja: *Pongamia pinnata* (L.f.) Pierre (Papilionaceae)
 (e) Arjuna: *Terminalia cuneata* Roth. (Combretaceae)

If one wishes happiness in his life, these tree species should not be planted in or vicinity of his abode (Verse-29).

5. (a) Nili: *Indigofera tinctoria* L. (Papilionaceae)
- (b) Haridra: *Curcuma longa* l. (Zingiberaceae)

Planting of Nili and Haridra in or near of his dwellings should be avoided, otherwise he will loss his sons and wealth or prosperity. If these plant species grow naturally in his ambiance or house, he should cut them off (Verse-31).

(B) General Suggestions:

1. (a) One should not transplant trees in front of a house (although it is beneficial to avoid their shade) (Verse-27).
- (b) One should avoid proximity of (i) thorny tree species as it may invite danger from enemies, (ii) laticiferous trees which cause loss of wealth (Verse-30).
- (c) One should not develop a garden (Nairf) (i.e. North-East) or Agni (South-East) corners of his house, otherwise he has to face distress and sorrow (Verse-32).
- (d) One should layout garden in north or west of his house. This will help increase children and grandchildren (Verse-33).

Results & Discussion

It is needless to state that plants played a vital role in human well-being since his birth on the Blue Planet. Role of plants is to mitigate the severity of climate, protection of soil cover and conservation of water. They also add to the beauty of a landscape. Man-plant relationship progressed through ages along with man's intellect. Mankind noted the importance of plant-world and eventually he documented his experience, observation and wisdom. This wisdom is quite well christened even in ancient lexicons. Indian civilization is rich in this context. The Vedas, Epics, Samhitas, Nighantus, etc. are part of Indian civilization. Their contents are replete with knowledge related to plant-world. One such lexicon viz., Brihat Samhita, authored by Varahamihira (6th Century AD.) informs on many aspects of plant life and relationships of mankind with the plant-world. The present author critically studied directions or guidelines for plantation in or in vicinity of human dwellings from the said lexicon. The results of this study are limelighted in this account.

Various tree species and their plantation in relation to houses are mentioned in Brihat Samhita. Total 15 plant species (13 dicotyledons and 02 monocotyledons) belonging to 12 genera (10 dicotyledons and 02 monocotyledons) and 10 families (08 dicotyledons and 02 monocotyledons) are advised for plantation near human abodes. Varahmihira provided guidelines for their presence on various directions about houses. He also paid attention about their bad or god omens. He tried to bring round place of plantation in view of prosperity and safe human life. He also advised avoidance of some plant species near the houses or pointed out wrong plantation sites and directions. This fund of data obviously informs on 'Vastushastra', an architectural science developed in Indian civilization through ages.

Vastushastra is an ancient architectural science in India. It directs us to have life in healthy environment. It considers environmental factors which have bearing on the quality of human lives. It thus helps us in creating a harmonious relationships between the environment and mankind. It is both the art and science of arranging objects that improve the flow of positive energy and prevents negative energy. It promotes human welfare, prosperity and even spiritual harmony (cf. Isthant Kumar and Gowda, 2024; Mithlesh Kumari, 2024; Arya, 2000; Rao, 2013; Sharma, 2007).

A new world is created by the plants as they connect us to the nature. If we select proper plant species, they help improve air quality in our surrounding. They thus keep us happier and healthier by offering physical benefits and lowering stress. Some plant species worth to note from Indian civilization can be relevant in such realm of approach with their influence. Parijat or Harsinghar (*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* L. Oleaceae) is generally planted in space of a house which produces fragrant flowers. It is to be planted at east or north facing side of a house, it helps eradicate negative vibrations. Its pleasant fragrance soothers our mind, releases stress and provides relaxation. Tulsi (Sacred Basil) (*Ocimum tenuiflorum* L. Lamiaceae) is commonly planted in front space of a house of Hindus, being thought auspicious and religious. It is aromatic and hence fillip energy in environment. It is also used as medicine and reported to have medical benefits. It should be planted in north or east or a house. This attracts good luck and wealth (cf. Mithlesh Kumari, 2024). Likewise, planting of Ashoka tree [*Saraca asoca* (Roxb.) Willd., Caesalpiniaceae], Mogra (Jasmine) (*Jasminum sambac* (L.) Ait, Oleaceae) etc. can be considered as benefits for welfare of mankind.

In a nutshell, in this context, the information adduced from the ancient lexicon viz., Brihat Samhita can be considered as a part of architectural science of Vastushastra. This science itself has origin in Indian culture.

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