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Dasapushpam (ten flowers) divine and healing herbs: A review

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Abstract

India has a rich history of traditional system of medicine. *Ayurveda* is one among that which is most ancient, widely accepted, practiced, flourished native system. A system of knowledge is accepted every where only when it is modified and improved as per time. The same idea is mentioned by *Ayurveda acharyas* which proves the importance of studying traditional drugs. The utility of different parts of plant of course stated centuries ago specially the use of divine flowers like *ketaki*, *kamala* etc in various ailments in, the concept of *Dashapushpam* is a prominent traditional medicine which constitute a group of ten potential herbs which are auspicious and medicinally potent to the people of south India especially state of Kerala, since from long time. These ten drugs are widely used by *Visha vaidyas* of Kerala to treat various diseases like wound, ulcer and fever of any origin. This article would give an insight of these ten flowering plants, its identification and their important properties to further studies.

Keywords: *Dasapushpam*, kerala, *Ketaki*, *kamala*, traditional drugs

Introduction

Right from the beginning humans were amazed by the duality of nature. Day and night, sun and moon, hotness and coldness, disease and health and lastly life and death. Happiness and sadness are the most important dualities of the mind afflicting a person. Success of man is fully based on his happiness. *Ayurveda*, a heavenly science that descended down with an intention to root out ailments from the world, does not only concentrate on *Aatura chikitsa* but also concentrates on *Swastya rakshana* of a *swastha* ^[1]. *Dasapushpamis* such a group which arrests the incentive of sinful acts, destroy the causative factors of all unhealthy and displeasing features and bestow good health and prosperity (*Shubhah*). They are effective in destroying all bad and harmful effects due to the ill or evil influence of *Balagraha* and its activities are more familiar to people of Kerala.

Cultural view on *Dashapushpam*

As per the tradition of Kerala, women wear *Dashapushpa* garlands on the head². In front of the house the flowers of *Dashapushpa* were displayed in the form of floral folk art (Pookalam) during Malayalam month of Karkkidakam (the monsoon season in Kerala when diseases are more prominent and the body has little resistance against diseases) in the olden days. It is also used with “*Ashtamangalyam*” – the group of eight auspicious substances that are stored in a large bronze vessel for offerings during weddings ^[3], was also prescribed by the *Rajavaidyas* (doctors for the king) to the women for wearing above stated plants on their head, probably due to their medicinal value imparted by them. *Dashapushpas* are also been consumed internally in the form of *Karkkadaka kanji* (Medicated gruel) in Karkkidakam (the monsoon season) to obtain health in the upcoming season ^[4]. ^{5]}. They are considered as auspicious and each herb is associated with a deity in Hindu mythology ^[6].

List of herbs represent *Dashapushpam* ^[7, 8, 9, 10]

1. Durva (God: Lord Surya)

Scientific Name - *Cynodon dactylon* (Linn.) pers. Family: Poaceae

It is a perennial slender creeping herb of grass family with small white flowers in spikelet. The entire herb is used in epistaxis (*Nasagata raktapitta*), haematuria (*Adhoga raktapitta*) and scabies.

Wearing this plant is believed to cure all diseases, brings longevity, pregnant ladies wear this for getting good and healthy off springs.

2. Vishnukrantha (God: Lord Vishnu)

Scientific Name - *Evolvulus alsinoides* (Linn.) Linn. Family: Convolvulaceae

It is a diffuse densely hispid herb with spreading branches, flowers blue, solitary on axillary filiform peduncles. Whole herb is specific for all kind of fevers (*Jwara*), a powerful brain stimulant (*Medya*), aphrodisiac (*Vrishya*), and uterine bleeding (*Asrigdara*)

Those who wearing this will get the blessings of lord Vishnu and all his "Avathaars"(incarnation) and all the prosperity in life.

3. Lakshmana (God: Mahalakshmi)

Scientific Name - *Ipomoea sepiaria* Koenig ex Roxb Family: Convolvulaceae

A slender twiner with slightly thickened perennial root, leaves ovate with cordate base, bloched with brownish patches towards the middle. Flowers light pink funnel shaped, fruit a capsule. It promotes bodily strength (*Balya*) and a reputed drug to cure sterility in women (*Vandyatva*).

Those who wearing this will get blessings from Goddess Lakshmi (Sree Bhagavathy), improves wealth and prosperity of the house, and Heart shaped leaves is believed to bring purity of heart.

4. Sahadevi (God: Lord Brahma)

Scientific Name - *Vernonia cinerea* (Linn.) Less. Family: Asteraceae

An erect hispid herb, leaves simple in variable shape and size, flower heads pinkish violet. The entire plant is considered very beneficial in fever (*jwara*), subdues mental distraction (*chetovikara*), leucorrhoea (*astisrava*) and bestows happiness and beauty (*mangalya and Kanti*) to women. Those who wear this herb will get blessings from Lord Brahma and removes poverty and sadness. There is a belief that if we worship this plant everyday, even the gateway will become gold. Bride and groom use this in form of collyrium made from this plant on the wedding day for getting the successful married life.

5. Bhringaraja (God: Lord Brahma)

Scientific Name - *Eclipta prostrata* (L.) L. Family: Asteraceae

It is an erect or prostrate strigosely hairy herb with white small flowers in axillary heads. The whole plant is a good rejuvenator (*Rasayana*), good for hair (*Keshya*), skin (*twachya*), eye diseases (*akshiroga*), cough and asthma (*kasa-swasa*).

Wearing this while meditating Lord Siva is like confession so that he will forgive all our sins and provide good and harmonious married life.

6. Alambusha (God: Sreeparvathy)

Scientific Name - *Biophytum sensitivum* (L.) DC. Family: Asteraceae

An erect hispid herb, leaves sensitive in touch, compound, crowded in to a rosette at tip of the stem, flowers small yellow

in long peduncled umbel inflorescence. The whole plant alleviate fever (*Jwara*), burning sensation (*Daha*), cronic cough (*kasa*) and urinary calculi (*Ashmari*)

Ladies always wear this on hair for the health of husband and children. There is a belief that Alambusha with three flowers at the same time in an inflorescence is a symbol of finding fortune underneath it.

7. Krishna Musali (God: Prithvidevi)

Scientific Name - *Curculigo orchoides* Gaertn. Family: Hypoxidaceae

A small perennial herb with long cylindric, root-stock. Flowers small, yellow in short scape. Musali is a reputed rejuvenative (*rasayana*), aphrodisiac (*Vrishya*), cough (*kasa*), jaundice (*Kamala*), and urinary diseases (*Mutra vikara*).

Dharana of the herb musali proven to be good for acquiring patience and tolerance also for getting better wisdom righteousnes etc

8. Indravalli (God: Lord Indra)

Scientific Name - *Cardiospermum halicacabum* L. Family - Sapindaceae

Annual tendrillar hook climber, leaves deeply lobed, flower small white in axillary cymose fruit a capsule. Root and leaves are diuretic (*Mutrala*), good for hair (*Keshya*), fever (*jwara*), and oedema (*shotha*). Dharana of this has proven to fulfill all the wishes and for attaining salvation after death, also stated that tying the plant around the pot with which first cooking is done for the child to getting food without any obstacles throughout the life.

9. Gorakshaganja (God: Lord Yama)

Scientific Name - *Aerva lanata* (Linn.) Juss. Family - Amaranthaceae

Much branched pubescent woody herb flowers minute white in axillary spicate clusters. The whole plant is diuretic (*Mutrala*), lithotriptic (*Ashmari bhedana*), diabetis (*Prameha*) and haemetemesis (*Raktapitta*). Yama the lord of death; hence the plant is included in all funeral rituals. It is believed to destroy the causative factors of all unhealthy features and bestow good health.

10. Shashasruti (God: Lord Chandra)

Scientific Name - *Emilia sonchifolia* DC. Family - Asteraceae

It is an erect decumbent or straggling annual herb bearing both radical and cauline leaves, flowers purplish or red on terminal long peduncled solitary or lax corymb. The whole plant is used in fever (*Jwara*), intestinal worm (*Udara krimi*), ear diseases (*Karna roga*) and specific for bleeding piles (*Raktarshas*). Wearing this will bring peace of mind and become more beauty.



Vernonia cinerea (Linn..)



Emilia sonchifolia DC.



Eclipta prostrata (L.) L.



Aerva lanata (Linn.) juss



Curculigo orchioides Gaertn



Ipomoea sepiaria Koenig



Evolvulus alsinoides (Linn.)



Cynodon dactylon (Linn.)



Biophytum sensitivum (L.)



Cardiospermum halicacabum L

Discussion

The concept of Dashapushpam which is a unique practice of Kerala state that not only shows their religious importance, Astamangalyam - honour of Hindu traditional families also their use or presence of these divine flowers will mark the different pathological and physiological conditions that are manifested during Chingam (August – September) seasons, where Pitta – Rakta doshas are vitiated. The herbs that are given importance in these are predominant of Tikta, Kashaya,

Katu rasas which boosts up the digestive fire, Cleanses the channels, wound healing, increases the intellect, anthelmintic, nutritious and proves to be immunoboosting, rejuvenating and aphrodising properties. So also the herbs mentioned in this group are easily available in western ghat regions and are used alone or as combinations in regular dietary substance by preparing local recipies like Karkataka kanji (Medicinal rice soup) etc.

Conclusion

The therapeutic potential of these ten sacred plants are unlimited and un-explored completely to cure various illness. Same time the population of these plants getting reduced day by day due to natural destruction. Hence we should conserve these medicinal plants and should try to discover new set of actions through scientific methodologies. The traditional practices which our ancestors were practicing will definitely have the scientific background which in those days was unexplored hence it is the need of the hour for young researchers to explore those secrets and efforts to be done in their standardization, mode of pharmacological activities, toxicity studies and clinical trials may help to develop new drugs for treating various diseases.

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