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## **SOCIO-RELIGIOUS IMPORTANCE OF PLANTS IN REWA REGION OF MADHYA PRADESH**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Tree occupies the important place in the history of India. Plants are integral parts of India life and culture and worshipped among various tribes in India. The present study provides the information regarding the socio-religious importance of plants in Rewa region of Madhya Pradesh. Rewa is a rich in ethnic and biological diversity since ancient times. The rural and forest area of Rewa were surveyed and covered extensively to record the socio-religious plants. During the survey 20 plant species have been enumerated which are being used by the people in various social and religious customs like marriage, worshiping, child birth, festivals and cremation.

## INTRODUCTION

The human culture, customs, ethos, religious rites, legends and myths, folk tales and folk songs, food as well as medicinal practices are deeply associated and influenced by plants. Indian culture has cosmic believes for all happenings in their life, including sickness and suffering, besides also have a close association and respect for many animals and plants in religious activities.<sup>1</sup>

Rewa is formerly the capital of the princely state of Rewa and former state of Vindhya Pradesh in central India. It is an important city in the North Eastern part of Madhya Pradesh State of India. The district is bounded on the north by Uttar Pradesh, on the east and southeast by Sidhi, on the south of Shahdol, and on the west by Satna. It lies between 24 18' and 25 12' north latitudes and 81 2' and 82 18'. The forest of the Rewa predominated by consist of tropical mixed deciduous types. It is famous of its religions importance, elegant environment and spiritual peace.<sup>2</sup>

Rewa region encompasses many plant species which are being used as food, shelter, clothing and medicines by the people of village communities. Besides these, some plants are used by the people in different social and religious customs, are known as Socio-religious plants<sup>3</sup>. The relationship between man and plant communities is as old as his hunger, and long before science was born, our ancestors studied the plants around them to meet their basic requirements, which laid the foundation of civilization<sup>4</sup>. Many festivals are associated with the significance of plants in India.<sup>5</sup>

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was carried out in Rewa district in 2012 year to find out the importance of plants in the religion, culture and health care system of people. The information regarding the use of plants in the religious activities and traditional healing system, amongst the tribal people, was collected through consulting the people and traditional herbal healers. The information collected on the basis of intensive interviews and long discussions with villagers of Rewa region regarding the uses of plants. A systematic position of each recorded floral taxa within the study areas were confirmed by reviewing various literature.<sup>6,7</sup>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the above survey 20 plant species belonging to different families have been enumerated and recorded in Rewa region, which are being used in different social and religious customs. The relevant informations regarding the role of socio-religious plants have been documented as Table 1 and religious festivals associated with plants have been documented as Table 2. The importance of plants in human life as food, fiber, cosmetics ect. was discussed time to time by many researchers. But the religious aspects of plants are not giving any attention and not much

explored. Some researchers explained the recognition of some specific plants in human culture such as Nargas and Trivedi<sup>8</sup> 2003 pointed out that *Azadirachta indica* is worshiped in India and its leaves are used to keep away the evil spirits. Ahirwar<sup>9</sup> 2013 explained religious importance of plants in Bundelkhand region.

**Table 1- Uses of Plants in Various Socio-religious Customs**

Common Name	Botanical Name	Uses
Bel	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	The leaves of this plant are dedicated to Lord Shiva on the occasion of Mahashivaratri and other religious occasion.
Pan	<i>Piper betle</i>	Its leaves is used in all religious ceremonies and regarded as a pleasure to Goddess Lakshmi.
Neem	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Leaves of this plant are hanged on the door of concerning family after returning cremation to avoid bad effect of soul.
Bhang, Ganja	<i>Cannabis sativa</i>	Bhang is obtained by drying the young leaves and dried flowering tops of female plants known as Ganja. Both are offered to please Lord Shiva.
Mirchi	<i>Capsicum annum</i>	Chilies along with lemons are hanged by businessman on their door to save from the effect of bad evils eye.
Chana	<i>Cicer arietinum</i>	Pulse of gram known as Deol is offered to God Bajrangbali at the time of Jethsudi Purnima.
Nimbu	<i>Citrus limon</i>	Fruits of this plant are offered to please Goddess Durga at the time of Navdurga Utsava. It is one of the most important festivals of Hindus and celebrated all over the India.
Haldi	<i>Curcuma domestica</i>	Turmeric powder mixed with rice used to put mark on the forehead at the time of many social and religious occasions to show respect. Associated with planet Jupiter, its paste is applied on the face and body of the bride and groom to get blessing. Turmeric powder mixed with rice used for invitation on the occasion of marriage ceremony.
Doob	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	It is used on the occasion of holy functions, festivals and marriages etc. Plant is also used at the time of child birth to convey the massage to the parent of married woman. It is offered to please Lord Ganesh.

Dhatura	<i>Datura alba</i>	Flowers and fruits of this plant are offered to please Lord Shiva.
Amla	<i>Emblica officinalis</i>	Hindus take their foods under this tree on the occasion of Ichchha Navmi in the month of Kartik.
Peepal	<i>Ficus religiosa</i>	It is associated with planet Saturn and Jupiter. People believe that God and Goddess live in the root, stem and leaves of this tree. Hence it is worshipped by Hindus family.
Jawa	<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	It is the most important part of hawan samagri. It is also used to produce the green small shoot of plants of barley known as Jaware at the time Nardurga utsava.
Bargad	<i>Ficus benghalensis</i>	It is considered as sacred and divine plant. Hindus Ladies worship it for the long life of their husband.
Aam	<i>Mangifera indica</i>	The leaves of mango tied in a string are hanged on the door at the time of child birth, marriage ceremony and other holy functions. Branches and leaves are also used to cover the marriage Mandap. Wood is used in worship and to perform fire sacrifice (Hawans). Associated with planet Venus.
Mahua	<i>Madhuca indica</i>	Flowers of this plant offered to worship the Harchhath. Delicate stem used as tooth brush by ladies at the time of Harchhath.
Kela	<i>Musa paradisiaca</i>	This plant is worshiped mainly on Thursday, as associated with planet Jupiter. Leaves and fruits are used on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi.
Tulsi	<i>Ocimum sanctum</i>	Associated with Lord Vishnu. It is worshiped and cultivated in the Hindus homes. People believe that if Tulsi is kept on the head of dying man he gets heaven.
Ganna	<i>Saccharum officinarum</i>	Sugarcane is worshipped by Hindus on the occasion of Devothani Ekadashi which is celebrated after Diwali.
Til	<i>Sesamum indicum</i>	Til mixed with water and used for bathing at the time of Makarsankranti, It is also considered as part of hawan samagri in many social and religious occasion

**Table 2- Religious Festivals Associated with Trees**

<b>Festivals</b>	<b>Month of festival</b>	<b>Species associated</b>
Sheela Asthami	March	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>
Vat Savitri	May	<i>Ficus bengalensis</i>
Bilvamengal	May-June	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>
Sawan ke Somvaar	Mid July-Mid August	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>
Somvari Amavasya	15 of all months	<i>Ficus religiosa</i>
Ichchha Navmi	Month of Kartik	<i>Emblica officinalis</i>

## CONCLUSION

The traditional culture and religion of human being have deep faith in the nature and its components in every walk of life. The religious activities as well as hypothesis also act as conserving tool for biodiversity. So it is necessary to preserve and promote these aesthetic values to conserve biodiversity and nature, which will surely play a role in betterment of human beings.

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