SACRED PLANT DIVERSITY AT TEMPLE FOREST OF BERNA VILLAGE AT HIMMATNAGAR TALUKA, SABARKANTHA DISTRICT (NORTH GUJARAT)

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Temple forests are managed and maintained to serve the temple. This may include economic, ecological, social and religious functions. In Rajasthan many forests are managed to meet the requirement of temples, which in turn support religious and social functions. Shri Nath ji temple in Rajasthan, India, has a large temple forest owned by the Temple Trust, and a sacred grove located in Gautameshwar forest block. Temple Trust management does not derive authority from state forest regulations. Management includes protection against grazing, fire, illicit felling, and fence wall breach.

Temple forests, by virtue of their size and visible locations, are comparatively studied more than other forms of traditional forest management. Some studies are available on temple forests of India, China, Nepal and Thailand. This sacred forest temple located near the Berna village in Himmatnager taluka of Sabarkanatha district. It lies between 23° 34' 58" north latitudes and 72° 58' 49" east longitudes. There is much plant diversity at this forest temple. There are many god and goddess temple. The entire temple present under the shadows of a variety of trees. Total area of this forest is approximately 600 ha. In these forest more than seven temples are situated which are: (1) Shri Kantaleshwar Hanuman Temple ashram(700 yrs old statues), (2) Sahastra Ling statue of God Shiva(First in the world), (3) Kamal Temple (Vaikunth Dham), (4) Saibaba Temple, (5) Goddess Khodiar temple, (6) Shri Bhairavnath Temple, (7) Naag devta temple and (8) Goddess Gayatri statue.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the study of sacred plant diversity at temple forest of Berna village at Himmatnagar taluka, Sabarkantha district (North Gujarat), we planned as under:

1) Visits to the above mentioned place were made. The plant material was collected and carefully handled for identification by authenticated sources.

2) The identification of plants is done using the following references:-
   i) The flora of Gujarat State
   ii) Flora of Bombay presidency

3) Most of the plant materials are preserved by making herbaria. The medicinal value of each plant is enumerated in the following pattern:
   a) Binomial
   b) Family
   c) Vernacular Name
   d) Parts used
   e) Traditional uses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1) *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss. (LIMDO)
   
   **Family:** Meliaceae
   
   **Parts used:** Whole plant
As Sacred: The Hindus hold every portion of this tree sacred and it is used in many religious ceremonies. Shitala, the goddess of small pox is said to inhabit it.

2)  *Aegle marmelos* (L.) Corr. (BILI)

**Family:** Rutaceae

**Parts used:** Whole plant

**As Sacred:** It is generally cultivated near the temple and dedicated to Lord Shiva, whose worship cannot be completed without the leaves of this tree.

3)  *Annona squamosa* L.(SITAPHAL)

**Family:** Annonaceae

**Parts used:** Stem, root, fruit and Seeds

**As Sacred:** The fruits are offered to the God and Goddess.

4)  *Anogeissus latifolia* (Roxb. ex DC.) Wall. ex Guill. & Perr.(DHAUVO)

**Family:** Combretaceae

**Parts used:** Stem-bark and leaves

**As Sacred:** The Bhils take a piece of leather, a piece of wood of this species and few hairs of a women and tie them around the neck of cattle for warding off the effect of evil eyes.

5)  *Anthocephalus cadamba* (Roxb.) Miq.(KADAMB)

**Family:** Rubiaceae

**Parts used:** Whole plant

**As Sacred:** The plant is said to be the favourite of Lord krishna, as he used to remain standing under its shade while playing with his flute.

6)  *Bambusa arundinacea* Roxb.(VANS)

**Family:** Poaceae

**Parts used:** Green leaves

**As Sacred:** The flowers are offered to the god and goddess.

7)  *Bombax ceiba* L.(SHIMLO)

**Family:** Bombacaceae

**Parts used:** Root, flowers, gum, stem and fruits

**As Sacred:** The flowers are offered to the God and Goddess.

8)  Scientific Name: *Boswellia serrata* Roxb. Ex Coleb.(SALAI)

**Family:** Burseraceae

**Parts used:** Twig

**As Sacred:** The gum-resin is offered to the God and Goddess and burnt near the sick persons.

9)  *Butea monosperma* (Lamk.) Taub.(KHAHARO)
Family: Fabaceae
Parts used: Gum, leaves, seeds, stem and flowers.
As Sacred: Its flowers are offered to Gods. Its flowers are called tesu or kesu, yield a brilliant but fleeting yellow dye, which is frequently used in India, particularly during the Holi festival.
10) Calotropis gigantea (Linn.) R.Br. ex Ait (SAFED AKADO)

Family: Asclepiadaceae
Parts used: Flowers, latex, leaves and root.
As Sacred: The flowers of these plants are used in the worship of Mahadeo and Hanuman.
11) Calotropis procera (Ait.) Ait.f. (AKADO)

Family: Asclepiadaceae
Parts used: Leaves, root, flower and latex.
As Sacred: Its flowers are used in the worship of Mahadeo and Hanuman.
12) Cassia fistula Linn. (GARMALO)

Family: Caesalpiniaceae
Parts used: Leaves, seeds, root, stem and fruit.
As Sacred: The flowers are offered to the god and goddess by them.
13) Catharanthus roseus (Linn.) G. Don. (BARMASI)

Family: Apocynaceae
Parts used: Leaves, flower
As Sacred: Its flowers as sacred are offered to Deities and Gods.
14) Cocos nucifera Linn. (NARIYEL)

Family: Arecaceae
Parts used: Fruit
As Sacred: The Hindus chiefly employ the fruits of this plants as offerings to the gods.
15) Commiphora wightii (Arnott) Bhandari. (GUGAL)

Family: Burseraceae
Parts used: Gum
As Sacred: The gum obtained from the tree, is burnt as incense on the holy occasions throughout the country.
16) Cynodon dactylon (Linn.) Pers. (DARBH)

Family: Poaceae
Parts used: Whole plant
As Sacred: This is used in many religious ceremonies, especially in Satyanarayana puja and the Hawan.
17) Dalbergia sissoo Roxb. (SISOO)

Family: Fabaceae
Parts used: Leaves, stem
As Sacred: As the Hindus considers this tree sacred, hence planted by them.

18) Scientific Name: *Datura metel* Linn. (DHATURO)
Family: Solanaceae
Parts used: Flower and Stem
As Sacred: The flowers are considered sacred to god Shiva, hence are offered to them.

19) *Diospyros melanoxylon* Roxb. (TIMRU)
Family: Ebenaceae
Parts used: Flower, stem, root and fruits
As Sacred: The fruits are offered to the god and goddess by most of the tribal communities.

20) *Emblica officinalis* Gaertn. (AMLA)
Family: Euphobiaceae
Parts used: Fruit and Twig
As Sacred: This tree is identified with Valmiki and worshipped by Bhill on 11th day of waxing moon (Amri Ekadeshi) to absolve themselves from the crime.

21) *Ficus benghalensis* Linn. (VAD)
Family: Moraceae
Parts used: Latex, stem, leaves, aerial root.
As Sacred: Hindu ladies worship the tree for being blessed with son, prosperity and long life of their husband, especially in May-June at the occasion of local festival called “Bar - Amavasiya or Vat - Savitri Pujan”.

22) *Ficus racemosa* Linn. (UMRO)
Family: Moraceae
Parts used: Twig, latex, stem, leaves.
As Sacred: The plant is considered as a sacred tree and it is common belief that there runs a hidden stream near every Umra tree.

23) *Ficus religiosa* Linn. (PIPAL)
Family: Moraceae
Parts used: Leaves, bark.
As Sacred: The Pipal tree is believed to be inhabited by the sacred tried, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.

24) *Ficus rumphii* Blume. (PIPAL)
Family: Moraceae
Parts used: Whole tree.
As Sacred: The plant is considered sacred and is worshipped by the people.

25) *Guazuma ulmifolia* Lam. (RUDRAKSHA)
Family: Sterculiaceae
Parts used: Fruit
As Sacred: Fruits are used in chanting
26) *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* Linn. (JASUD)

Family: Malvaceae
Parts used: Flowers
As Sacred: Its flower are favourite of Goddess Kali, the divine mother. So the devotees of Durga offer the flowers in their worship.
27) *Holarrhena antidysenterica* (Linn.) Wall. (KADVO INDRAJAV)

Family: Apocynaceae
Parts used: Fruit
As Sacred: The plant is fabled to have sprung from the drops of 'amrita' or water of life, which fell on the ground from the bodies of Rama's monkeys, which were restored, to life by the God Indra.
28) *Madhuca indica* J.F. Gmelin. (MAHUDO)

Family: Sapotaceae
Parts used: Leaves, flowers, stem.
As Sacred: Five leaves are moved up and down before the body of victim to ward off evil-eyes effect.
29) *Mitragyna parvifolia* (Roxb.) Korth. (KALAM, KADAMB)

Family: Rubiaceae
Parts used: Flower and Twig
As Sacred: The tender twigs are chewed after funeral ceremony for purification.
30) *Musa paradisiaca* Linn. (KELA)

Family: Musaceae
Parts used: Fruit
As Sacred: Its fruits are always offered to the Gods and the mandaps are also made of its leaves in the worship of Satyanarayana.
31) *Nelumbo nucifera* Gaertn. (KAMAL)

Family: Nelumbonaceae
Parts used: Stem, flower
As Sacred: The flower of Lotus are said to be sacred to 'Laksmi', the goddess of wealth and prosperity.
32) *Nerium indicum* Mill. (KAREN)

Family: Apocynaceae
Parts used: Roots and flowers
As Sacred: Its flowers are collected and are offered as sacred offerings to Shiva by the Hindus.
33) *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* Linn. (PARIJATAK)

**Family:** Placeae  
**Parts used:** Flower and Twig  
**As Sacred:** The flowers are offered to the god and goddess.

34) *Ocimum sanctum* Linn. (TULSI)

**Family:** Lamiaceae  
**Parts used:** Leaves  
**As Sacred:** The leaves make one of the constituents if Charnamrit offered to Lord Vishnu in Satyanarayana katha.

35) *Polyalthia longifolia* Thw. (ASHOPALAV)

**Family:** Annonaceae  
**Parts used:** Leaves, stem  
**As Sacred:** These are employed in marriage ceremonies for covering mandapas.

36) *Prosopis cineraria* (Linn.) Druce. (KHIJADO)

**Family:** Fabaceae  
**Parts used:** Stem, wood  
**As Sacred:** Wood of this plant is useful in HAVAN.

37) *Santalum album* L. (CHANDAN)

**Family:** Santalaceae  
**Parts used:** Stem  
**As Sacred:** The piece of wood is rubbed on the stone and the paste so formed is offered to the god and goddess for marking "tilak" on forehead.

38) *Syzygium cumini* (Linn.) Skeels. (JAMBU)

**Family:** Myrtaceae  
**Parts used:** Fruits, leaves  
**As Sacred:** The Brahmins are fed under this tree and its leaves are used as platters or Panch pallavas and for pouring libations.

39) *Tamarindus indica* Linn. (KHIATI AMLI)

**Family:** Fabaceae  
**Parts used:** Seeds  
**As Sacred:** The tribal ladies worship the tree in the month of Sawan for prosperity and bright future.

40) *Tectona grandis* L.f. (SAAG, HAAG)

**Family:** Verbenaceae  
**Parts used:** Leaves, stem  
**As Sacred:** The leaves are spread on the bier used to carry the dead before lying the body.
41)  *Thespesia populnea* (Linn.) Sol. ex Corr. (PARAS PIPLO)

**Family:** Malvaceae

**Parts used:** Leaves, fruits, roots

**As Sacred:** Hindus employ its leaves in the religious ceremonies attending death.

42)  *Tinospora cordifolia* (Willd.) Miers ex Hook.f. (GALO)

**Family:** Menispermacae

**Parts used:** Root, stem

**As Sacred:** Plant is often bruised and put into water, the liquid thus formed being drunk by the Brahmins at some of their religious ceremonies.

43)  *Wrightia tinctoria* R.Br. (DUDHLO, KUDI)

**Family:** Apocynaceae

**Parts used:** Leaves, flowers

**As Sacred:** The white, jasmine scented flowers are much esteemed by the Hindus as offerings at temples.

44)  *Zizyphus mauritiana* Lamk. (BOR)

**Family:** Rhamnaceae

**Parts used:** Stem-bark, fruits

**As Sacred:** The Hindus on the festival of Shivratri offer its fruits to Shiva.

**REFERENCES**