“REVIEW OF MEDICINAL FLOWERS IN INDIA”

1Vd. Shraddha R. Bhujbal and 2Dr. Apoorva Sangoram

12nd Year PG, Dravyaguna, M.D., Ph.D. (Dravyaguna) Tilak Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Pune.
2H.O.D. (Dravyaguna Dept.) Tilak Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Pune.

ABSTRACT
Apart from their aesthetic sense, flowers have medicinal and nutritive properties also. An attempt has been made to present the uses of flowers that are mentioned in various Ayurvedic texts. Separate chapters have been mentioned to describe flowers in the ancient texts as Pushpavarga in Sushrut Samhita, Bhavaprakash Nighantu etc. But many of this plant with flowers as medicinally useful parts, have still remained underexploited due to lack of awareness of their potential uses. In Ayurveda, flowers are used in the treatment of various diseases. Pushpa Ayurveda is a special branch of Ayurveda which was developed by Jain priest which describes 18,000 types of flowers. In terms of pharmacological properties flowers being milder in nature, have special uses in medicinal system. In some cases, properties of flowers may differ from properties of other parts. Ex. Nirgundi (Vitex nigundio) pushpa have Sheeta veerya whereas other parts of it have Ushna veerya. Some special properties have been attributed to certain flowers like Agasti (Sesbania grandiflora) which is used in Naktandhya (Night blindness). Most popular flower buds of Lavanga is used as a spice as well as a medicine. Flowers of Kovidara (Bauhinia purpurea), Kashmari (Gmelina arborea), Shalmai (Bombax ceiba) are advised in the form of vegetables in the treatment of Raktapitta. Dhataki (Woodfordia fruticosa) flower mentioned in Ayurveda is used as a fermenting agent in the preparation of Aasava- Arishta. In the present paper an attempt has been made to highlight the importance of medicinal flowers and its indication in various ailments.

KEYWORD: Vitex nigundio, Sesbania grandiflora, Gmelina arborea, Bombax ceiba.
INTRODUCTION

Flowers are beautiful creation and they just have that magic in them to make a person feel good. But they are not only used for their aesthetic sense but also for nutritive and medicinal properties also. Though there are many review articles about the medicinal plants, only few research papers are published on medicinal flowers. Hence the topic is selected and the references of flowers as useful part in the treatment are collected.

Many times, parts used for medicinal purposes are roots, fruits, stem bark, seeds and then flowers in the decreasing order. The search in the Ayurvedic formulary of India reveals 1477 incidences for roots, 399 of fruit, 481 of stem bark, 373 of seed and 42 instances of flowers. Many of the plants with flowers as medicinally useful part, have still remained underexploited due to lack of awareness of their potential use. Hence the present paper mainly focuses on importance of medicinal flowers in curing disease. In India more than 43% of the total flowering plants are reported to be medicinal importance. Extensive information about flowers is available in the Ayurvedic literature like Vruksharyurveda.

Flowers are directly eaten as petals or in the form of decoction, juice, syrup, arka, powder etc. Poplar flower includes spices like cloves, saffron etc. Dhataki (Woodfordia fruticosa Kurz.) flower mentioned in Ayurveda is used as a fermenting agent in the preparation of Asava Arishta. Bee processed flower nectar also known as honey is often named based on the flowers. The medicinally useful part may be entire or petals as in Shatapatra (Rosa centifolia Linn.) or infloroscence as in Kumbhi (Careya arborea Roxb.) or Stigmas as in Saffron (Crocus sativus Linn.) etc.

Pushpa aushadhi is an alternative medicine which includes healing concentrates of flowers in liquid form. They help to balance mental and emotional disharmony and ultimately heal the body.

Aims and Objective

The main aim and objective of this work is to evaluate all the references of plants whose flowers are mentioned as a useful part in treatment of the disease

MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

All the references are collected from the Classical uses of Medicinal plants by Acharya P.V.Sharma. These references are again cross checked from Bruhat trayi samhitas.
previous articles published on the Medicinal flowers are also referred. Around 46 references of different flowers as a useful part are collected and they are divided into different branches of Ashtang Ayurveda.

**Historical background**

Pushpa Ayurveda is a special branch of Ayurveda which was developed by Jain priest includes use of 18000 types of flowers. In the 9th century text called Kalyan Karakam written by Ugraditya Acharya gives details of using flowers in the treatment of particular disease. In the Siddha system of medicine flowers are known as a Malar and its property of blooming and withering is used in many diseases.

Flowers have been described extensively in details in Ayurveda. They are called as Pushpa, Kusuma, Sumana in Sanskrit. Different terminologies like Vikasita Pushpa, Prafullit pushpa, Supta pushpa etc. are termed.

Study of Ayurvedic classics shows that flowers are used in various contexts. Sushruta has also described Pushpa varga in Sutra sthana while describing various s Aahar varga. Vagbhata quotes use of flowers of Priyangu (*Callicarpa macrophylla* Vahl.) Dhataki (*Woodfordia fruticosa* Kurz.), Padma (*Nelumbium speciosum* Willd.) etc in the contexts of “Priyangu Ambashthadi gana” which is useful in the treatment of Atisara, Vranaropana etc. He has also mentioned flowers like Kumuda (*Nymphaea alba*), Utpala etc for the purpose of Mukha lepa. In the later period different Nighantus like Bhavaprakash nighantu, Raj nighantu have also described Pushpa varga separately.

Pushpa aushadhi system of alternative medicine was developed by Dr. Edward Bach. It’s a system of 38 flower remedies that corrects emotional imbalance. Many synonyms of different plants are based on appearance, taste, size, aroma and action of flowers of that plant.

**Based on the appearance of the inflorescence**

Kharamanjiri- Apamarga (*Achyranthes aspera* Linn.)
Bahumanjii- Tulasi (*Ocimum sanctum* Linn.)

**Based on the Kesara (stamens)**

Raktakesara- Paribhadra (*Erythrina indica*)
Kumkum kesar - Saffron (*Crocus sativus* Linn.)
Based on color of the flower
Tamra pushpa- Patala (*Stereospermum suaveolens* DC.)
Swarna pushpa-Aragvadha (*Cassia fistula* Linn.)

Based on the taste
Tikta pushpa - Patha (*Cissampelos pareira* Linn.)
Guda pushpa - Madhuka (*Madhuca indica* J.F.Gmel.)

Based on aroma
Teekshna pushpa- Lavang (*Syzygium aromaticum* Linn.)
Gandha pushpa- Ketaki (*Pandanus odoratissimus* L.f.)

Based on seasonal availability
Vasant pushpa- Kadamba (*Anthocephals cadamba* Miq.)
Varsha pushpa- Mahabala (*Sida rhombifolia* Linn.)

Based on similarity
Mallikapushpa- Kutaj (*Holarrhena antidysenterica* Wall.)
Dadima pushpa- Rohitaka (*Tecomella undulata* Seem.)

When we go through the references of use of flowers following main references are available

**In Kayachikitsa**

**In Raktapitta chikitsa (for controlling hemorrhage)**
- Use of flowers of Kovidara (*Bauhunia purpurea* Linn.), Kashmari (*Gmelina arborea* Linn.) and Shalmali (*Bombax malabaricum* DC.) in the form of vegetables are advised in the Raktapitta. (Cha. Chi 4/70)
- Powdered flowers of Khadir (*Acacia catechu* Willd.), Priyangu (*Callicarpa macrophylla* Vahl.), Kovidara (*Bauhunia purpurea* Linn.), Shalmali (*Bombax malabaricum* DC.) with Honey is also advised in Raktapitta chikitsa.(Cha. Chi. 4/70)
- Flowers of Palasha (*Butea frondosa* Koen.ex.Roxb.) with double quantity of Sugar should be taken in Raktapitta.(S.B.M )
- Nasya with swaras of Dadima (*Punica granatum* Linn.) pushpa is advised in Nasagat raktapitta (Epistaxis). (Cha. Chi. 4)
- Paste of roots and lowers of Matulunga (*Citrus medica* Linn.) with Tandulodaka reduces Nasagata raktapitta. (S.U.45/31)
In Raktarsha (Bleeding piles)

- Regular use of Navaneet with sugar and Ambhoj (Nelumbium speciosum Willd.) kinjalka (stamens of lotus) destroys raktarsha. (A.H.Chi. 8/118)
- Nagakeshara (Mesua ferrae Linn.) churna is an excellent remedy for controlling hemorrhage in Raktarsha and Raktatisara. (Vangasen)
- Use of Navaneeta with Nagakeshara (Mesua ferrae Linn.) helps to get rid of Raktarsha. (Cha. Chi. 14/210).

In Kushtha (Skin disorders)

- External application of flowers of Karpasa (Gossypium herbaceum Linn.) destroys Kushtha. (Cha. Chi. 7/96)
- Oil cooked with root, bark, leaves and flowers of Karpasi (Gossypium herbaceum Linn.) with Takra alleviates Kapal kushtha. (Vaidya Manorama)
- Paste of Madhuka (Madhuca indica J.F.Gmel.) flowers pounded with Milk is useful in Pama kushtha. (S.B. 4)
- Sushrut has described flower of Kutaj (Holarrhena antidysenterica Wall.) as Kushtaghna. (Su.Soo. 46)

In Pleeha vruddhi (Spleenomegaly)

- Flowers of Shalmali (Bombax malabaricum DC.) well steamed should be kept overnight and then taken with Rajika churna helps to reduce Pleeha vruddhi.

Vyadhi of Pranavaha srotas=

- Sushruta recommends flowers of Vasa (Adhatoda vasica Nees.) and Agasti (Sesbania grandiflora Linn.) in Kshaya and Kasa as they have Tikta rasa and Katu vipaka. (S.USu. 46/281).
- Leha (Linctus) prepared with Kesara (stamens) of Kantakari (Solanum xanthocarpum Schrad & Wendl.) flowers alleviates chronic cough in children. (Bha. Pra. Chi. 71/16)
- Child gets rid of Hikka by licking flowers of and fruits of Jambu (Eugenia jambolana Lam.) and Tinduka (Diospyros embryopteris Pers.) with Ghruta and Madhu. (Vangasena).
- Nagakeshara (Mesua ferrae Linn.) with sita and madhu along with Ikshurasa and Madhudaka is useful in reducing Hikka. (S.U. 50/23).
- Fruits and flowers of Patala (Stereospermum suaveolens DC.) with Madhu should be given in Hikka. (S.U. 50/27).
• Powder of Vasa (Adhatoda vasica Nees.) flowers dried in shade with Madhu is useful in Shosha and Kasa .(S.B. 4/27).
• Swaras of Shirisha (Albizia lebbeck Benth.) pushpa with pippali and Madhu is useful in Kaphapittadhik Hikka shwas. (Cha. Chi. 17).
• Flowers of Kadali (Musa sapientum Linn.), Kunda and Shirisha (Albizia lebbeck Benth.) mixed with pippali are pounded with Tandulodaka and given to Patient of Shwasa. (Bha. Pra. Chi. 14/37).

In Vatavyadhi
• Buffalo’s milk is curdled with powder of Agasti (Sesbania grandiflora Linn.) pushpa and the butter extracted from it is useful in severe Vatarakta. (Vrunda madhav 23).
• Use of Kumkum (Crocus sativus Linn.), Aguru etc is generally advised in vatavyadhi. (Su. Chi. 4/24).

Vyadhi of Mutravaha srotas
• Kwatha of Kamala (Nelumbium speciosum Willd.), Utpala, Shrungataka (Trapa bispinosa Roxb.) is useful In Mutrakruchchha. (Cha. Chi. 26/51).
• One karsha of Kumkum (Crocus sativus Linn.) kept in Madhudaka for overnight and taken in the morning is useful in Mutraghat. (Su. U. 58/31).
• Punarnava, Rajani, Agaru etc and flowers of Darbha (Desmostachya bipinnata Stapf) pounded with milk, water and Ikshurasas is given in Ashmari and Sharkara. (Cha. Chi. 26).
• Flowers of Narikela (Cocos nucifera Linn.) with milk help to reduces Mutra sharkara. (Bha. Pra. Chi. 37).

In Prameha
• One suffering from Kapha and Pitta meha should take powdered flowers of Kampillak (Mallotus philippensis Muell.), Saptaparna (Alstonia scholaris R. Br.), Shala (Shorea robusta Gaertn. F.) etc with Madhu. (Cha. Chi. 6/35).
• Paste of flowers of Kutaja (Holarrhena antidysenterica Wall.), Kapittha (Feronia elephantum Correa), Rohitaka (Tecomella undulata Seem.) is useful in Prameha. (Su. Chi. 11/8).
Vyadhi of Annava srotas
- Sauvarchala, Arka (Calotropis gigantean R.Br.ex.Ait.) pushpa and Maricha in equal parts should be pounded together and guti of 1 Gunja stimulates digestion, (S.B. 4/354).
- Utpala, Dadima twak and kesara of Kamal (Nelumbium speciosum Willld.) taken together with tandulodaka alleviates Jwaratisara. (Bha. Pra. Chi. 3/11).
- In child, Modaka prepared form Dhataki (Woodfordia fruticosa Kurz.) pushpa, Laja and Sharkara is useful in Atisara. (A.H.U. 2).
- Lavanga (Eugenia aromatica Kuntze) Ambu is useful in Visuchika. (Vrunda madhav0

In Balaroga
- Leha (Linctus) prepared with Kesara (stamens) of Kantakari (Solanum xanthocarpum Schrad & Wendl.) flowers alleviates chronic cough in children. (Bha. Pra. Chi. 71/16).
- Child gets rid of Hikka by licking flowers of and fruits of Jambu (Eugenia jambolana Lam.) and Tinduka (Diospyros embryopteris Pers.) with Ghruta and Madhu. (Vangasena).
- Kesara of Shweta kamal (Nelumbium speciosum Willld.) pounded with Tandulodaka and mixed with sharkara reduces Pravahika in Child. (Vangasena Balroga).
- In child, Modaka prepared form Dhataki (Woodfordia fruticosa Kurz.) pushpa, Laja and Sharkara is useful in Atisara. (A.H.U. 2).

Vyadhi in the Urdhwanga

In Netra roga
- Sushrut recommends intake of flowers of Agasti (Sesbania grandiflora Linn.) in Naktandhya. (Su. Soo. 46).
- Lavang is described as Netrahitam by Bhavaprakasha. (Bha. Pra. Ni.).
- Godugdha cooked with Pundarika (Nelumbium speciosum Willld.) and instilled in eyes removes Vedana, Raga and haemorrhage. (Vangasena Netraropga).
- Flowers of Aparajita (Clitoria ternatea Linn.) pounded with godugdha and applied on Eyes alleviates Kukunaka in Childern. (Vaidya Manorama).
- Flowers of Palasha (Butea frondosa Koen.ex.Roxb.) should be rubbed with Madhu in Pittabhishyanda. (Su. U. 10).
- In Abhishyanda caused by Rakta flowers of Patala (Stereospermum suaveolens DC) pounded with Madhu or Ikshu rasa ashould be used in the form of Anjana. (Su. U.12).
- To prevent Netra roga , One should put flowers of Jati (Jasminum grandiflorum Linn.) and Mallika (Jasminum sambac Ait.) on eyes in the night. (A.H.Su. 24/22).
Harenuka pounded with swaras of Flowers of Jambu (Eugenia jambolana Lam.) and Aamra (Mangifera indica Linn.) with Madhu and Ghruta should be used as Anjana in Netraroga. (Su. U.17).

Saireyaka (Barleria cristata Linn.) mukul (Flower buds) with Haridra, Darvi with Madhu is advised for sprinkling after Arma shastra karma. (Su. U.).

**In Shira shool**
- Shira shool caused by Pitta and Rakta is alleviated by taking Nasya of Ghruta cooked with Sharkara and Kumkum (Crocus sativus Linn.).
- Flowers of Muchakund (Pterospermum acerifolium Willd.) relieve the Shira shool. (Vrunda madhav).

**In Mukha roga**
- To produce clarity and Fragrance one should kept Lavanga (Eugenia aromatica Kuntze) in Mouth. (Cha. Su. 5/57).
- Bakul (Mimusops elengi Linn.) pushpa is specially indicated in Krumidanta.(Bha Pra. Ni.).

**In Kesha vikara**
- Bibhitaka oil cooked with kwath and kalka of Root, flowers and leaves of Kashmiri (Gmelina arborea Linn.) and taken as Nasya reduces Palitya. (Gadanigraha).
- Gokshura (Tribulus terrestris Linn.) and Tila (Sesamum indicum Linn.) flowers are mixed with equal quantity of Ghruta and Madhu and paste is applied on head to promote hair growth. (Sha. S.MA. Kha.).
- One who takes bath after applying paste of Loha mala, Aamalaka and Japa (Hibiscus rosasinensis Linn.) flowers doesn’t suffer from palitya. (Vrundamadhav).

**In Visha chikitsa**
- Flowers of Kapittha (Feronia elephantum Correa) and Meshashrungi or Bhalalaaka should be used separately in Vrushchika dansha. (Su. K.1/71).
- The flowers of Karanja (Pongamia glabra Vent.), Arjuna (Terminalia arjuna W & A.), Shleshmantaka (Cordia myxa Roxb.) etc with Dadhi are applied as paste on Vrushchika dansha. (A.H.U. 37).
• The clusters of blossoms of Tilaka (*Wedlandia exerta* DC.) with milk are advised in Mushika visha. (A.H.U. 38/29).
• Sita marich soaked in swaras of Shirisha (*Albizia lebbeck* Benth.) pushpa for one week is good remedy for snake bite as nasya, paan and abhyanga. (Cha. Chi. 23).

❖ **In Stree roga**
• Intake of Japa (*Hibiscus rosasinensis* Linn.) flowers and Jyotishmati leaves pounded in Kanji onduces Menstuation. (Chakradatta).
• A woman during menses taking Japa (*Hibiscus rosasinensis* Linn.) flowers pounded with Kanji followed by Puran guda doesn’t conceive. (Bha. Pra. Chi. 70).
• Women suffering from pradara should take 10 to 12 buds of Japa (*Hibiscus rosasinensis* Linn.) Flowers pounded with milk keeping on milk diet. (Gadanigraha).
• Powder of Devadali (*Luffa echinata* Roxb.) flowers with milk helps in making delivery easy. (Vaidya Manorama).
• Powder of Dhataki (*Woodfordia fruticosa* Kurz.) pushpa with Madhu should be used in Shweta pradara. (Vrunda madhav).
• For women during season should take Neelotpala with Dhataki (*Woodfordia fruticosa* Kurz.)s pushpa and Madhu in the morning for Conception. (Gadanigraha).
• Nagakeshara (*Mesua ferrae* Linn.) with Takra for 3 days keeping on diet of Takra helps to reduce Shweta pradara. (Vangasena).
• Leaves of Shweta kamal and Neelotpala mixed with Madhu, Sharkara and taken with Dugdha is useful in Garbhastrava chikitsa. (Gadanigraha).

❖ **As a Rasayana**
• Ghruta processed with paste of Mrunal (Stalk), Kesara (Stamen), Bisa (Stem), Patra (Leaf) and Beej (Seed) of Kamal i.e. “Pancharavinda Ghruta” promotes Paurusha, Bala, Pratibha etc. (A.H.U. 39).
• Ghruta processed with Naal (Stalk), Kanda (Root), Dala (Leaf) and Kesara (Stamen) of Utpala improves Intellect. Chatu:kuvalaya ghruta (A.H.U. 39).

**DISCUSSION**

Here an attempt has been made to present the uses of flowers that are mentioned in different Ayurvedic classics. Separate chapters dedicated to flowers in different Nighantus highlights it’s importance. In terms of pharmacological properties flowers being milder in nature, have
special uses in medicinal system. In some cases, properties of flowers may differ from properties of other parts. Ex. Nirgundi (Vitex nigundio) pushpa have Sheeta veerya whereas other parts of it have Ushna veerya. Some special properties have been attributed to certain flowers like Agasti (Sesbania grandiflora) which is used in Naktandhya (Night blindness). Most popular flower buds of Lavanga is used as a spice as well as a medicine. Flowers of Kovidara (Bauhinia purpurea), Kashmari (Gmelina arborea), Shalmai (Bombax ceiba) are advised in the form of vegetables in the treatment of Raktapitta. Dhataki (Woodfordia fruticosa) flower mentioned in Ayurveda is used as a fermenting agent in the preparation of Aasava- Arishta.

CONCLUSION

Considering the importance of flowers and its indication in various diseases, the topic is chosen to collect the references of use of flowers in the treatment of various diseases. References of about 46 flowers in various ailments are presented according to various srotas. Apart from classical references, now day’s flowers of Sadapushpi are used as hypotensive, hypoglycemic agents. Marigold flowers are used in liver swelling, skin illness. Petals of Calendula flowers is used to heal cuts, burns etc. Fragrant flowers like Pandanus, Rose, Champa are used on various essences, aromas and also for cosmetic purposes.

Thus it can be concluded that flowers being the sukumar (Delicate) prayojyanga of the plant they are very useful in treating Pitta-Rakta based samprapti. Fragrance (Gandha) signifies dominance of Pruthvi mahabhuta. Hence flowers are thus very versatile part of the plant.

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