ROLE OF MEDICINAL PLANTS IN NON-THERAPEUTIC PURPOSES IN
AYURVEDA: A SHORT REVIEW
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ABSTRACT
Medicinal plants are the inherent part of Ayurvedic system of medicine. Different forms of plant extract are used in the Ayurvedic treatment regimen. But interestingly the uses of plant either partly or fully in Ayurveda, is not only limited to its direct use in therapeutics, but they are used indirectly in several other places of interest, which are related to pharmaceutical processing and manufacturing of Ayurvedic drugs, or in the application of medicaments to the patients. This interesting short review illuminates the non-therapeutic role of medicinal plants in Ayurveda.

Keywords:  Ayurveda, Medicinal plants.

INTRODUCTION
Ayurveda approaches through holistic treatment through natural drugs. Henceforth, plants are the obvious choice of seers and luminaries of Ayurveda in the preparation of potent medicines. They carefully manipulated the pharmacological and therapeutic action of the plants and prepare the dosage form that’s best suited for the healing of a particular disease. They are used in the Ayurveda in the form of various therapeutic roles in different dosage forms:
• Pancha vidha Kasya Kalpana: Plants are primarily used in the form of five basic forms; they are swarasa (freshly expressed juice), kalka (paste), hima (cold infusion), phanta (hot infusion) and kwatha (decocition).
• Secondary kalpanas: Plants are also the nucleus of the recipes for the preparation of sneha, sandhan and other kalpanas.
• Kshara preparation: Plants are used in the form of their burnt ashes.
• Sodhana karma: Plants are also used for sodhana karma of various metals and minerals to detoxify them and increase their therapeutic value.

Apart from the direct therapeutic role, plants play an important part in other sectors of Ayurveda. Whether pharmaceutical formulation techniques, or application of dosage forms, Ayurvedic medicinal plants, play an important role in non-therapeutic area also in the field of Ayurveda.

Role of medicinal plants in non-therapeutic area
As a fuel: According to Rasa Ratna Samuchchaya, Coal obtained by burning the wood of Madhuka (Madhuka indica) and Khadira (Acacia catechu) is best for liquefaction of metals in Rasashastra. Coal derived from Vamsa (Bambusa bambos) is
used when intensive fire and heating is required whereas, for *swedana* process (boiling) coal of *Badara* (*Ziziphus sativus*) is preferred as a fuel.

**As an ingredient in manufacturing Ayurvedic pharmaceutical utensils:** Mushas are pharmaceutical apparatuses used for heating various kinds of substances of therapeutic importance. Mushas can be compared with modern day crucibles. *Sana* (*Corchorus species*), *Bala* (*Sida cordifolia*), *Vajra valli* (*Cissus quadrangularis*) are used with other ingredients for the preparation of Mushas.

**In human body dissection:** In *Avagharsana* process, *Sushruta* developed a highly methodical and scientific approach for dead body dissection. In this process the dead body is first cleaned internally by removing fecal matter and intestines. Then the dead body is kept over elevated bed over current of cow dung cakes. After pouring the melted *Kajjali*, it is pressed by another slab made up of similar materials, and after self cooling, the crunchy black layers of *Parpati* is collected and powdered and stored in the bottle.

**Putapaka swarasa preparation:** *Puta paka swarasa vidhi* is applied for those plants for which *swarasa* preparation is very difficult, like *Vasa* (*Adhatoda vasica*). For those particular plant leaves, they are taken and made into bolus form and then they are wrapped in with big and sturdy leaves like *Vata* (*Ficus species*), *Jambu* (*Eugenia jambolana*), etc and tied with threads and covered with mud. It is dried and then burned within the flame of cow dung cakes. After the completion of process the plant bolus is taken out and squeezed to extract the juice.

**In Size reduction:** Size reduction is performed in the case of preparation of homogeneous *Abhraka* (*Mica*) by the sharp edges of *Sali dhan* (*Oryza sativa*). In this process mica and 1/4th *Oriza sativa* are taken in a
jute bag/blanket and dipped in water or sour gruel for three days. After the *Oryza sativa* get swelled up by imbibitions, it creates immense pressure to the adjacent mica in the enclosed wrapper, continuous levigation causes extra force by which the *Oryza sativa* breaks the mica into small pieces and thus comes out from the wrapper to the fluid. The mica thus obtained is known as Dhanyabhakra⁷.

**CONCLUSION**

Thus we see there is a vast array of different requirements of medicinal plants in *Ayurveda*. Besides the therapeutic role, these plants are also useful in manufacturing of other drugs. Apart from pharmacological action of these plants which are responsible for therapeutic use, the physical structure and morphology of these plants are useful to describe their utility in non-therapeutic field. For example the good incinerating property of *Ziziphus species* or *Acacia catechu* wood makes it a good fuel, where as large structure of the leaf of *Ficus species* or *Butea monosperma* makes it a good medium for wrapping purposes in the preparation of *Puta paka swarasa*. Good abrasive quality and brush like structure of *Viteveria zizanioidis* makes it a good scrubber for *Avagarsana* process.

**REFERENCES**


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