

## FLOWERS IN ANCIENT CLASSICS

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### Introduction:

Brahmaiva puṣpam ~ verily *Brahman* is the flower  
(*Chāndogya Upaniṣada 3.5.1*)

Flower is the most attractive part of the plant which bewitches with its beautiful harmony, colour and fragrance. It symbolizes blossoming of universal consciousness and the smile of spirit hidden in nature.

In *Āyurveda*, flower has distinct place and used in health and disease from time immemorial. The use of flowers in health and daily life has been given various texts like *Caraka Samhitā*, *Suśruta Samhitā*, *Aṣṭāṅga Hridaya* & in various nighantus. Never the less, the topic is interesting and it evidently shows the importance of flowers in relation to health & disease.

**Puṣpa Nirukti:** -

**Puṇya samvardhanāccāpi pāpoudhaparihārāt.**

**Puṣpa kalārtha pradānācca puṣpamityābhidhīyate..**

(*Kularnavatantram 17/76*)

A flower is so called as it promotes virtue by eliminating sins and ugliness and fulfills desires immensely. It strongly supports the role of flower in mental health.

Flowers participate in a number of groups of drugs mentioned in the *Samhitās*. In the *Caraka Samhitā*(*Sū. 4*) flower are included in following *Vargas*.

**1. Mūtravirajanīya:** (Drugs eliminating abnormal colours of urine)

It contains ten items that are all flowers such as Padma, Utpala, Nalina, Kumuda, Sauganadhika, Puṇḍarīka, Śatapatra, Madhuka, Priyangu and Dhātakī.

**2. Puriṣa Virajanīya :** (Drugs eliminating abnormal colours of stool).

It contains *Madhūka*, *Utpala*.

**3. Puriṣa Sangrahanīya :**

This group contains *Dhātakī* flowers and stamens of lotus.

**4. Dāhapraśamanīya :**

**It also contains *Madhūka* & *Nilotpala*.** In **Suśruta Samhitā** (*Sūtra sthāna 38*) flower are included in following *gaṇas*. Ācārya Suśruta monenclatured it according to the first drug of the respected *gaṇas*. e.g. first drug of *Utpalādi gaṇa* is *Utpala*

**1. Utpalādi :(Sūtra sthāna 38/52-53)**

It is similar to *Caraka's mūtravirajanīya* and contains varieties of lotus and lily.

This group alleviates burning sensation and disorders of Pitta and Rakta and is useful in thirst, poison, heart disease, vomiting and fainting

1. Anjanādi:(Sūtra sthāna 38/41-42)

This group contains *Nāgapuṣpa*, *Priyangu*, *Nilotpala* and stamens of lotus.

3. Priyangvādi :(Sūtra sthāna 38/45)

It includes Dhātakī, Punnaga, Nāgapuṣpa and stamens of lotus.

4. Ambasthādi:(Sūtra sthāna 38/46)

This group contains flowers of *Dhātakī* , stamens of lotus.

The above two groups (*Priyangvādi* & *Ambasthādi*) are useful in mature diarrhea. Besides, they promote union and healing in wounds.

5. Sārivādi: :(Sūtra sthāna 38/39-40)

Flowers of Mahuka are included in this group. *Sarivādi* gaṇa alleviates thirst, intrinsic hemorrhage and fever caused by pitta particularly burning sensation.

6. Elādi :(Sūtra sthāna 38/)

It includes *Kumkuma* and stamens of *Punnāga*. *Elādi* gaṇa pacifies *Vāta* & *Kapha*, counteracts poison, improves complexion and itching, boils, urticarial patches.

**Flowers Used In Various Disorders:**

- ☞ Hridroga (Heart-disease) -- *Utpala*(Su.sū.38/53).
- ☞ Internal haemorrhage -- *Dhātakī*(Su.sū.38/47), *Madhūka*(Su.sū.38/42) stamens of lotus(Ca.sū.25/40), *Nāgapuṣpa*(Ca.ci.14). *Kovidāra*(Su.sū.46), *Śālmālī* & *Śleṣmātaka* flowers(Bhavprakash).
- ☞ Insanity -- *Nilotpala*, *Nāgakeśara* & *Jāti* flowers (Ca.Ci 9/33-41).
- ☞ Alcoholism -- *Naga puṣpa* (Su.uttara-47/38)
- ☞ Fainting -- *Dādima*(Su.Uttara 46/16), *Madhuka*(Su.sū 38/52) flowers.
- ☞ Excessive sleep -- *Nāgakeśara*, *Nilotpala* (Vangasena , Netraroga 573).
- ☞ Head disorders(Siro roga) -- *Utpala*, *Prapoundarika*, *Kamala*, *Nāgakeśara*, *Nilotpala*, and *Padmaka*(Ca.Ci 26/161,168,182).
- ☞ Diseases of eye -- *Jāti*, *Śobhānjana*, *Nilotpala*, *Kumuda*, *Śīriṣa*, *Bilwa*, *Kāśmarya*, *Kumkuma* flowers.(Ca.Ci-26/233-253)
- ☞ Poisons -- *Śīriṣa*(Ca.sū-25/40), *Priyangu*(Su.sū.38/42), and *Kumkuma*(Su.kalpa 6) flowers.
- ☞ Disease of children -- *Śīriṣa*, *Dhātakī*, *Lajjālu*, *Nāgakeśara*, *Kantakāri* flowers(P.V.sharma part II).

Thus, flowers play an important role in combating human, especially disorders caused by *Pitta doṣa*, *Viṣa*, *Mānasvikāras*. Beside this flowers used by ancient Indian people, for various purpose in day-to-day life like wearing flowers & garlands, scenting

clothes, interior decoration, worship of gods etc. Thus, they help in felicitating mental well being.

The habit of Indian to use flowers for personal decoration is noticed in ancient texts of Āyurveda. *Caraka & Suśruta* mentioned the importance of flowers in *Dinacaryā* for felicity and health. Following are few examples.

#### **Interior Decorations:**

For interior decoration in the house, flowers like *Mallikā* etc. are used by women to promote auspiciousness and beauty.

#### **Worship of Gods:**

Flowers are offered in worship of Gods after taking bath. To the Goddess, red flowers and white fragrant ones including *Śephāli* and *Aparājitā* should be offered. Flowers of *Dhaturā*, *Karavīra*, *Arka*, *Śamī*, *Bakula* are favorite to lord Shiva. The Sun God should be worship with the flowers of *Arka*, *Japā*, *Karavīra* and *Kimśuka*.

(*Vācaspatyam. Vol-V. 4354 p.*)

#### **Cosmetic Powders :**

In ancient days, women as has been recorded in Kalidasa's Meghaduta used powder of Lodhra flowers as face powder.

#### **Paste After Bath :**

Post-bath paste of *Kumkuma*, *Candana* checks perspiration, foul smell, abnormal complexion & exertion. (Su. Ci. 24/63)

#### **Wearing Flowers And Garlands:**

Use of scents and garlands is aphrodisiac, provides pleasant smell, longevity, charm, nourishment and strength, pleasure and destroys inauspiciousness.

Putting on flowers averts demons, promotes *ojas* and auspiciousness and enhances charm. (Kshemakutuhalam 8/31-32)

#### **Flowers In Dining Room:**

Dining room as well as table should be decorated with sweet smelling flowers, which provide pleasure and consequent contentment and strength. (Su.sū.46/458)

#### **Scenting Water With Flowers:**

After boiling water, it should be dipped with flowers of *Pātalā*, *Karavīra* etc. to make it fragrant and pleasing. Vāgbhata in the context of summer regimen says that water should be well cooled scented with *Pātalā* flowers and added with camphor. (AS.sū. 6/25; AH. Su. 3/32)

### As Aphrodisiac:

Fragrance and beauty of flowers acts as aphrodisiac. Wine is scented with *Utpala* flowers and bed is bedecked with bunch of different flowers. (Su.Ci.26/8-9), (A.H.Uttara. 40/46).

### While Drinking Wine:

According to Suśruta one who drinks wine after making his limbs wet with water, having smeared sandal wood paste on his body, wearing of flowers, will never suffers from ailments due to drinking. While describing the finest types of drinking occasions *Caraka* narrates – that the *sātvika* manner of drinking, when drinks after adoring one self with fragment flowers garlands. (Su.Uttara 47/81,Ca.Ci.24/11,73-75)

### Swimming:

Suśruta a recommends that in autumn, one should swim in tanks adorned with lotus and blue lotus. (Su.Uttara.64/15)

### Seasonal Regimen:

Suśruta a advises different kinds of flowers in different seasons. The mentioned wearing garlands of white flowers in autumn and in summer he recommends garlands of lotus. In summer, one should cover his bed with banana leaves and flowers of *Kamala* and *Utpala* along with lotus – stalks to eliminate excessive heat. (Su.Uttara. 64/14,20)

### Conclusion:

On over all observation it would be evident that flower, as they are delicate and soothing in nature, are useful mostly in disorders of Pitta, intrinsic haemorrhage, eye disease, and poisoning. The pitta doṣa is in direct relation, in controlling mental function like ‘*dhi*’, ‘*Smṛti*’, thus flowers shows the importance in combating ailments and also in maintaining mental health.

### Botanical Name of Used Medicinal plants

Aparājītā- <i>Clitoria ternatea</i> Linn	Arka- <i>Calotropis gigantea</i> Linn.R.Br.ex.Ait.
Bakula – <i>Minusops elengi</i> Linn	Bilva- <i>Aegle marmelos</i> Corr.
Candana- <i>Pterocarpus santalinus</i> Linn.f.	Dādīma- <i>Punica grauatum</i> Linn
Dhātākī- <i>Woodfordia fruticosa</i> Kurz	Dhaturā- <i>Datura stramonium</i> Linn.
Japā- <i>Hibiscus rosa- sinensis</i> Linn.	Jātī- <i>Jasminum officinale</i> Linn
Kamala- <i>Nelumbium speciosum</i> Willd.	Kantakārī- <i>Solanum xanthocarpum</i> Schrad & Wendl.
Karavīra- <i>Nerium odorum</i> Soland	Kāśmarya- <i>Cassia occidentalis</i> Linn
Kimśuka- <i>Butea frondosa</i>	Kouvidāra- <i>Bauhinia purpura</i> Linn

<i>Koen.ex.Roxb.</i>	
Kumkuma – <i>Crocus sativus</i> Linn	
Kumuda- <i>Nymphaea alba</i> Linn	Lajjālu- <i>Minosa pudica</i> Linn
Lodhra- <i>Symplocos racemasa</i> Roxb	Maduka- <i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> Linn
Madūka- <i>Madhuka indica</i> T.F.Gmel	Mallikā- a variety of <i>Jasminum sambac</i> Ait
Nāgapuṣpa/Nāgakeśara- <i>Musea ferra</i> Linn	Nalina –a variety of Padma
Nilotpala- <i>Nymphaea stellata</i> Wild	Padma - <i>Nelumbo nucifera</i> Geartn
Pātalā— <i>Stereospermum susveolence</i> DC.	Prapoundarika- <i>Cassia absus</i> Linn.
Priyangu- <i>Callicarpa macrophylla</i> Vahl	Pundarīka-red variety of <i>Nymphaea lotus</i> Linn
Punnāga- <i>Colopfiyllum inophyllum</i> Linn	Śālmālī- <i>Salmalia malabarica</i> Schott
Śamī- <i>Prosopis spicigera</i> Linn.	Śatapatra- <i>Rosa centifolia</i> Linn.
Saugandhika - <i>Nymphaea rubra</i> Linn	Śephālī- <i>Nyctanthes abor-tristis</i> ,Linn
Śirīṣa- <i>Albizzia lebbeck</i> Benth.	Śleṣmātaka- <i>Cordia dichotoma</i> Forst.f
Sobhānjana- <i>Moringa oleifera</i> Lam	Utpala - <i>Nymphaea alba</i> Linn.

**Abbreviation:**

**AH.- Aṣṭāṅg Hrdaya**

**AS.- Aṣṭāṅg Samgraha**

**Ca.-Caraka Samhitā**

**Ci-Cikitsā sthāna**

**Kalpa-Kalpa sthāna**

**Sū- Sūtra sthāna**

**Su-Suśruta Samhitā**

**Uttara-Uttara tantra/sthāna**