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MEDICO-HISTORICAL REVIEW OF *NYAGRŌDHA* (*Ficus Bengalensis* Linn.)

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ABSTRACT

Nyagrōdha the Banyan tree (*Ficus bengalensis* Linn.) is a sacred medicinal plant since Vedic times. The English name Banyan is given by the Britishers to this tree because under the tree Banias i.e., the Hindu merchants used to assemble for business. The triad Ganges, the Himalayas and the Banyan tree are symbolise the images of India, hence it is considered as National Tree. Ficus means fig and bengalensis means belonging to or is of Bengal. To the most of Indians it is Sacred and symbolizes all three Gods of Hindus. The bark represents Lord *Viṣṇu*, *Brahma* the roots and *Śiva* the branches. Since Vedic times its small branches are used in *Yajña* (a sacrificial rite) and known for its giant structure. Alexander the Great is said to have camped under a banyan tree, which was big enough to shelter his whole army of 7,000 men. As per *Vēda* it checks the environmental pollution and one of the source of *Lākṣā* (Lac). Its medicinal importance is well documented in *Āyurvēda* literature. However, more research needs for understanding the medicinal properties of this symbolic tree.

Introduction

Nyagrōdha (*Ficus bengalensis* Linn.) is a sacred medicinal plant since Vedic times. The English name Banyan is given by the British to this tree because under this tree Banias i.e., the Hindu merchants used to assemble for business. Banyan belongs to the family Moraceae, a family of deciduous or evergreen trees and shrubs, often climbing, mostly of pan tropical distribution, and native of India, where it is venerated. The Banyan, the Ganges, and the Himalayas these three symbolise the images of India, hence it is considered as the National Tree. The tree has been described as the most astonishing piece of vegetation on the face of this Earth. It grows throughout the forest tracts of India both in sub Himalayan region and in the deciduous forest of Daccan and South India. *Nyagrōdha* means which obstruct or which covers. In ancient literature this plant knows as *Nyagrōdha*, afterwards it is familiar as *Vaṭa*, which means surrounds

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or encompass. In the Latin name Ficus bengalensis, Ficus means fig and bengalensis means belonging to or is of Bengal. This tree is considered immortal and is an integral part of the myths and legends of India. Even today, the banyan tree is the focal point of village life and the village council holds under the shade of this tree. To the most of Indians it is Sacred and symbolizes all three Gods of Hindus. The bark represents Lord *Viṣṇu*, *Brahma* the roots and *Śiva* the branches. Since Vedic times its small branches are used in *Yajña* (a sacrificial rite). According to traditions, Godess *Lakṣmī* visits it on Sundays. In ancient times it was normally planted in *Āśrama* and in the hub, boundaries of the villages and known for its giant structure. In Andhra Pradesh, the banyan tree known as *Timmamma Marrimānu at Gūṭibayalu* in Kadiri Taluk of Anantapur District spreads more than five acres and may be 500 years old. Which occupies a place in Ginnes book of world records as biggest tree in 1988. Alexander the Great is said to have camped under a banyan tree, which was big enough to shelter his whole army of 7,000 men. Its medicinal importance is well documented in Ayurvedic literature.

The *Vaṭa or Nyagrōdha has* been sometimes perplexed with the *Aśvattha*. Both trees bears the synonyms *Bahupāda* - many footed, and *Śikhaṇdin* - crested. But the *Vaṭa* is specially described as *Skandaja* - born out of the trunk, *Avarōhasya* - sending down the branches, *Skandaruha*-growing from its own trunk. In Indian Mythology it is stated that an enormous *Vaṭa* tree was grown upon Mount *Suparva*, situated to the south of the celestial Mount *Mēru*, and covers eleven *Yōjana*. *Dēvakī*, mother of Lord *Kṛṣṇa* when pregnant, is said to be have taken refuge under a *Vaṭa* tree from *Kaṁsa*, who had destroyed her first six children. The tree was a special favorite of the Buddha and to the Indian Sages for sitting under it. There is one famous tree mentioned in *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Uttara Rāma Carita*, the *Kūrmapurāṇa* and etc, which still growing on an Island in the *Nerbuddha*. It is said to be planted by the Sage Kabir some two thousand years ago, and is popularly known as the Kabir Bar.[1]

Nyagrōdha symbolizes *Śiva*, therefore it is considered as sacred. The tree is called as the crested one. The ability of the tree to support its ever growing branches by the development of adventitious roots from its branches and roots. And act as props over an ever widening circle, represents eternal life and that is why the tree is called *Bahupāda*, one with many feet and is symbol of long life, and associated with divinity. The tree is also a symbol of *Brahma*, worshipped on *Vaṭa-sāvitrī* day, and on Saturdays of the month of *Jyēṣṭha* by women to pray for the long life of their husbands. Often the tree

grows in close proximity with the Neem tree. The inter-twined branch of the two trees is holy union to the Hindus and is normally not cut down. *Nyagrōdha* tree in Hindu mythology is called *Kalpavṛkṣa* or the wish fulfilling tree, a tree that gives, food, drink, clothes, ornaments, gift of children and even beautiful maidens to the worshipper. This anthropomorphic worship of the tree is represented in a Buddhist sculpture from Besnagar. The tree has been depicted with long, pendant, adventitious roots and with untold wealth in the form of gold pieces in vessels placed under the tree. There are three trees associated with the attainment of Omniscience by Buddha. Buddha sat for seven days under an *Aśvattha* tree, the tree of Enlightenment, growing on the banks of river Nairanjana absorbed in the bliss of his enlightenment. Then he rose and sat under a *Nyagrōdha* tree for seven days, absorbed in the bliss of his illumination. At the end of that period he sat in blissful calm under a third tree. These three trees are known as the tree of Enlightment, Goatherd and the serpent king Muchalinda respectively. The last tree is so named because Muchalinda, the serpent king, protected Buddha with his hoods from a storm, as Buddha sat in meditation. [2]

Vaṭa/ Nyagrōdha in *Vēda*

Vēda are the earliest literature of India, among four *Vēda Atharvavēda* contains more information about the science of Medicine. In *Ṛgvēda* and *Sāmavēda Nyagrōdha* or *Vaṭa* are not mentioned. But in *Ṛgvēda* it appears to have been known as 'Pischel', which may be recognized by its characteristics as *Vaṭa/Nyagrōdha* (*Ṛag* 1-24-7). It is frequently mentioned in *Atharvavēda* and later literature. In *Atharvavēda* it is mentioned along with its sister tree *Aśvattha*. In *Śukla Yajurvēda* while explaining about the *Aśvamedhayāga* it is mentioned that the sacrificial bowls (camasa) made up of *Nyagrōdha* wood. In *Atharvavēda* it is mentioned along with *Aśvattha* while quoting big trees, in the hymns spells to drive away *Gandharva* and *Apsarā*. It is also mentioned that where *Nyagrōdha* grows there *Gandharva* and *Apsarā* won't come. It means that it drives way *Kṛmi* (germs). In other place it mentioned that *Nyagrōdha* trees were grown during Vedic times for *Vāyumaṇḍala suddhi*, which means the control of environmental pollution. And while describing about *Lākṣā* (Lack) it is quoted that *Nyagrōdha* also as source of *Lākṣā* (Lack).[3]

Vaṭa/Nyagrōdha in *Purāṇa*

The *Purāṇa* are ancient literature discuss varied topics like devotion to God,

traditional sciences like *Āyurvēda, Jyōtiṣa* (Astrology), cosmology, concepts like *Dharma* (right way of living), *Karma* (deeds), reincarnation and many other subjects. In *Vāyu purāṇa* it is mentioned that *Vaṭa/Nyagrōdha* symbolize the prosperity, the fruits formed as food for *Durgā* and worshiped by *Yakṣa*. According to *Kūrma purāṇa, Padma purāṇa and Mastya purāṇa* it is stated, "who ever die under *Vaṭa* tree they directly goes to *Svargalōka* (heaven)". In *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, the tree is compared to *Viṣṇu*. "As the wide spreading *Nyagrōdha* tree is compressed in a small seed, so at the time of dissolution, the whole universe is compressed in these as its germ. As the *Nyagrōdha* germinates from the seed and becomes first a shoot and then rises into loftiness, so the created world proceeds from thee and expands into magnitude." According to *Vāmana purāṇa* the *Vaṭa* tree arouses from *Maṇibhadra*, the chief of *yakṣa*. In *Mārkaṇḍēya purāṇa* while describing the *Jambudvīpa* it is stated that "a *Vaṭa vṛkṣa* (the great Banayan tree) stands on *Suparva* mountain. And in conclusion of the description of Earth it mentioned that at *Mēru parvata* there is green leaved *Nyagrōdha* and the people drink the juice of its fruits. And the men who eat its fruits live for thousand years, prominent for sexual pleasures, pure, free from old age and ill odours. In the tale of *Satyavāna* and *Sāvitrī*, *Satyavāna* lost his life beneath the branches of a banyan. *Sāvitrī* courageously entered into a debate with *Yama*, the God of Death, and won his life back. In memory of this couple, in the month of *Jyēṣṭha* during May and June, the tree is worshiped. Married women visit a banyan and pray for the long life of their husbands.

In *Rāmāyaṇa Maharṣi Vālmīki* quoted many trees, among those the *Vaṭa vṛkṣa* (banayan tree) at *Pancavaṭi* was an important one and in *Ayōdhyā, Araṇya, Yuddha etc Kāṇḍa* the *Vaṭa/Nyagrōdha* mentioned. In *Mahābhārata Maharṣi Vēda Vyāsa* mentioned that *Pāṇḍava* during their *Vanavāsa* (dwelling or residence in a forest) spent for about four months under the *Vaṭa vṛkṣa*. In *Bhāgavata* it is described that young *kṛṣṇa* slept on Banyan leaf. According to *Manusmṛti Kṣatriya* (warriors) are eligible to keep the *Daṇḍa* (wooden weapon) prepared by Banayan. *Varāhamiśra* the author of *Bṛhat saṁhita*, the encyclopedia of work described about the *Vallīkaraṇa* (methods of preparing bonsai). Either *Viṣṇu or Śiva* tenants *Nyagrōdha* planted in front of temples. The tree planted in public places like cross roads, village squares have lesser divinities such as *Yakṣa*, *Kinnara*, or *Gandharva*. *Nyagrōdha* is the Bodhi tree or the tree of Enlightenment of *Kaṣyapa muni*. During the universal deluge at the end of an epoch, *Nārāyaṇa* sleeps on a leaf of *Nyagrōdha*.[2, 3]

Vaṭa/Nyagrōdha in *Āyurvēda*

The materia medica of *Āyurvēda* is of great antiquity and vast. According to *Caraka* the drug is the important one among the *Catuṣpāda* (the pillars upon which the treatment depends - physician, drug, attendant, and patient). In *Saṁhitā and Nighaṇṭu* literature it is mentioned as one of the important drug in *Kṣīrīvṛkṣa, Nālpamara, and Pañcavalkala* the group of trees, which secrete milky latex, bark is main useful part and having the *Kaṣāya rasa* (astringent taste). In *Caraka saṁhita Vaṭa/Nyagrōdha* is mentioned in *Mūtrasaṅgrahaṇīya, Kṣīrīvṛkṣa and Kaṣayaskandha* (group of drugs having astringent taste) It is used in *Puṁsavana*, and in various conditions during pregnancy, perpetual, Gynecology, and in *Jvara, Raktapitta, Uraḥkṣata, Atisāra, Visarpa, Vraṇa, Grahaṇī, Kāsa, Tṛṣṇā, Viṣa, Hṛdrōga*, etc. And also mentioned that it grows in *Jāṅgala dēśa.* In *Suśruta saṁhitā* also it is indicated in *Puṁsavana* and in *Sūtrasthāna* mentioned as one of the sacrificial tree in *Śiṣyōpanīya.* And mentioned in *Nyagrōdhādi gaṇa* which is useful for *Vraṇarōpaṇa* (wound healing), *Saṅgrāhī* (astringent to the bowls), *Asthisandhāna* (help in healing of fractures & dislocation), *Raktapitta* (hemorrhagic disorders), *Dāha* (burning sensation) *Mēdōrōga* (Obesity) and *Yōnirōga* (vaginal disorders) etc. It also indicated for *Vraṇaśōdhana, Bhagandara, Kuṣṭha, Pramēha, Udara, Vidradhi, Visarpa, Śōpha, Ūrdhvajatrugata rōga.* In *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya* it included in *Pittaghna, Nyagrōdhādi gaṇa* and indicated in *Pūyamēha, Kāsa, Rājayakṣama, Chardi, Arśa, Gulma, Vraṇa Utsādana.* In *Aṣṭāṅga saṅgraha* it is mentioned as first drug in *Dantadhāvana Dravyā* and included in *Kṣīrīvṛkṣa, Mūtra saṅgrahanīya Mahākaṣāya, Nyagrōdhādi gaṇa, Pittaśāmaka Dravya.*[4]

Vaṭa/Nyagrōdha in *Nighaṇṭu* literature

The *Āyurvēda* books/literature on drugs is known as "*Nighaṇṭu*" (Ayurvedic drug lexicons or dictionaries), which deplete the synonyms and information about the drugs. Hence the knowledge of *Nighaṇṭu* is essential. In almost of all *Nighaṇṭu Nyagrōdha* quoted, for example here below mentioning in which group it is quoted. The details follow

Name of the *Nighaṇṭu*	-	**Group in which *Nyagrōdha* quoted.**
1. *Abhinava Nighaṇṭu*	-	*Vaṭādi Varga*
2. *Bhāvaprakaśa*	-	*Vaṭādi Varga*
3. *Dhanvantari Nighaṇṭu*	-	*Āmrādi Varga*

4. *Hṛdayadīpika Nighaṇṭu* - *Kapha pittaghna varga*
5. *Kaiyadēva Nighaṇṭu* - *Auṣadhi varga*
6. *Madanapāla Nighaṇṭu* - *Vaṭādi varga*
7. *Madanavinōda* - *Vaṭādi varga*
8. *Rāja Nighaṇṭu* - *Āmrādi varga*
9. *Śōḍhala Nighaṇṭu* - *Āmrādi varga*
10. *Śāligrāma Nighaṇṭu* - *Vaṭādi varga*

Classical names[5]

Vaṭa, Raktaphala, Śṛṅgī, Nyagrōdha, Skandaja, Skandaruhā, Dhruva, Kṣīrī, Vaiśravaṇavāsa, Bahupāda, Jaṭī, Jaṭālā, Avarōhī, Maṇḍalī, Viṭapī, Mahāchāyā, Yakṣataru Yakṣavāsa, Rōhiṇī, Pādarōhiṇī.

Vernacular names

Arabic	- *Jhatule jaibva*	Urdu	- *Bargad, Bad.*
Assami	- *Vat, A hat, Vatgach, Bot.*	Telugu	- *Peddamari,Marri,vaṭa.*
Bengali	- *Bar, Bot, But.*	Tamil	- *Alamaram,Peral, AI, Alam*
Burmese	- *Pyi-nyoung.*	Sindhi	- *Wur, Bur.*
English	- *Banyan.*	Santhal	- *Bare.*
Gujarathi	- *Vad, Vadlo, Vor.*	Punjabi	- *Bor, Bera, Bohir, Bohar, Bargad.*
Hindi	- *Baṭ, Baragada, Baḍa, Bor, Ber.*	Oriya	- *Bata, Bara, Born.*
Kannada	- *Ala, Alada, Mara, Vata.*	Marathi	- *Vada, Wad, War.*
Kashmiri	- *Bad*	Malayalam	- *Peral,Vatavrksam, Ala, Vat am.*
Konkan	- *Goeliruku.*		

Botanical classification

Kingdom	:	Plantae
Division	:	Magnoliophyta
Class	:	Magnoliopsida
Order	:	Urticales
Family	:	Moraceae
Genus	:	Ficus
Spices	:	Bengalensis

Distribution

The tree occurs throughout the forest tracts of India, in Sub Himalayan region,

Rohilkhand, common in Sal forests of Dehradun and Saharanpur, wild or cultivated all through Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, in deciduous forests of Deccan and in all districts. And from sea level to 1200 m in deciduous and semi evergreen forests of South India.

Botanical description

A very large, spreading tree grows up to 30 meters in height with wide spreading branches sending down many aerial roots functioning as prop roots. Thus extending the growth of the tree indefinitely. Young parts are softy pubescent, bark greenish white. Leaves simple alternate, often in clusters, at ends of branches, stipulate coriaceous, 10-12 cms broad, ovate or orbicolar-ovate to broadly elliptic, entire, glabrescent above, glabrous or minutly pubescent beneath, base rounded or sub cordate, strongly 3-7 nerved with about 5-7 pairs of lateral nerves above the basal ones and distinct, retuculate venation between. Peduncles 1.3-5cms long stout. Stipules 2-2.5 cms long, coriaceous. Figs/ Recepticle are about 2cms diameter, axillary, sessile in pairs, globose puberulous coriaceous basal bracts. The male, female, and gall flowers are enclosed in receptacles. Male flowers rather numerous near the mouth of receptacles. Sepals 4 and lanceolate, stamen 1. Female flowers fertile perianth shorter than male, style elongated. Gall flowers perianth as in the male. Style short. Fruits are small, custaceous achnes, enclosed in the common fleshy recepticles.

Parts used

Stem bark, latex, leaf, aerial root, and fruit.

Actions and uses

The whole plant is astringent, remgerent anodyne, vulnerary, depurative, anti-inflammatory, ophthalmic, styptic, antiarthritic, diaphoretic, antidiarrhoeal, antiemetic and tonic. The aerial roots are useful in obstinate vomiting, leucorrhoea and osteomalacia of limbs. The bark is useful in burning sensation, haemoptysis, haemorrhages, diarrhoea, dysentery, diabetes, enuresis, ulcers, skin diseases, gonorrhoea, leucorrhoea and hyperdipsia. Leaves are good for ulcers, leprosy, allergic conditions of skin and applied hot as poultice for abscesses. The apical buds are useful in diarrhoea and dysentery. The fruits and seeds are refrigerant and tonic. Latex is externally applied for pains and bruises and useful in rheumatism, lumbago, nasal inflammation, bleeding and inflammations of gums, haemorrhoids, gonorrhoea, inflammations, cracks of sole and skin diseases.

Ayurvedic properties

Rasa - *Kaṣāya*

Guṇa - *Guru, Rūkṣa*

Vīrya - *Śīta*

Vipāka - *Kaṭu*

Dōṣaghnatā - *Kaphapittaśāmaka*

Rōgaghnatā - *Vraṇa, Kṣata, Vipādikā, Sandhiśōtha; Āmavāta, Vaṅkṣaṇaśōtha, Granthiśōtha, Karṇasrāva, Dantaśūla, Nētrābhiṣyanda, Arma, Śukra rōga* (latex); *Stanaśaithilya, Carmarōga, Chardi, Vraṇa* (aerial roots); *Dāha, Varṇavikāra, Visarpa, Śvētapradara, Raktapradara, Pramēha, Raktātisāra, Atisāra, Pravāhikā, Raktavikāra, Raktapitta* (bark).

Karma - *Vēdanāsthāpana, Vraṇarōpaṇa, Raktarōdhaka, Śōthahara, Cakṣuṣya, Stambhana, Raktaśōdhaka, Raktapittahara, Garbhāśayaśōthahara, Śukrastambhana, Mūtrasaṅgrahanīya, Dāhapraśamana; Garbhasthāpana* (apical bud).

Dose

Decoction : 50 to 100 ml.

Powder : 3 to 6 gm.

Latex : 5 to 10 drops.

Pharmacognosy

Stem bark - Mature stem bark is grey in colour with thin, closely adhered ashy white, light bluish green or grey patches. The bark is flat or slightly curved, and the thickness varies with age of tree. Externally it is rough due to presence of horizontal furrows and lenticels, mostly circular and prominent. Fracture is short in outer two thirds of bark while inner portion shows a fibrous fracture. Taste is astringent.

The transverse section of mature bark shows compressed cork tissue and dead elements of secondary cortex consisting of mostly stone cells and thin walled compressed elements of cortex. Cork cells are rectangular, thick walled and containing brownish content. Secondary cortex is wide, forming more than half of thickness of bark, composed of large groups of stone cells and parenchymatous cells. Stone cells vary in shape. Parenchymatous cells are somewhat cubical to oval, few in number and occur between groups of stone cells. Some of cells contain prismatic crystals of calcium oxalate, starch grains and tannin. Secondary phloem is composed of a few sieve elements, parenchyma, fibres, stone cells and latex tubes alternating with medullary rays. Sieve

elements are compressed in outer region of bark while intact in inner region. Few thick walled phloem parenchyma are present in between patches of phloem fibres and stone cells. Stone cells are similar to those present in secondary cortex, some phloem cells contain prismatic calcium oxalate crystals, also present in fibres forming crystal fibres. Medullary rays are 2-5 seriate, composed of thick walled, circular to oval cells, few cells also converted into stone cells and some have pitted walls, also containing plenty of starch grains, which are mostly round, rarely oval or semi- lunar in shape, simple as well as compound type. Compound starch grains consist of 2-3 components. Cambium is composed of a few layers of small, rectangular, thin walled cells.

Physical constants

Foreign matter	- Not more than 2 %;
Total ash	- Not more than 8 %;
Acid insoluble ash	- Not more than 3 %;
Alcohol soluble extractive	- Not less than 6 %;
Water - soluble extractive	- Not less than 8 %.

Chemical constituents

Leucoanthocyanin, two flavonoid compounds, *viz.*,5,7-dimethyl ether of leucopelargonidin-3-0-a-L-rhamnoside and 5,3' -dimethyl ether of leucocyanidin-3-0-a-D-galactosyl cellobioside; three methyl ethers of leucoanthocyanins- delphinidin- 3-0-a-L- rhamnoside (I), pelargonidin- 3-0-a-L- rhamnoside (II), leucocyandin- 3-0-b-D-galactosylcellobioside (III); 20-tetratriaconten- 2-one, pentatriaconten- 5-one, 6-heptatriaconten- 10-one, -b-sitosterol- a- D- glucoside and meso- inositol (stem bark); tiglic acid ester of Y - taraxasterol (heartwood); quercetin- 3- galactoside, rutin, friedelin, b--sitosterol and surface hydrocarbons (leaves).

Substitutes and adulterants

The powder prepared from fruits of *Ficus bengalensis* is used to adulterate *Kampillaka* i.e. *Mallotus philippinsis* (Lamk.) Muell.- Arg.

Formulations and preparations

Pañcavalkala kaṣāya	*Nyagrōdhādi ghṛta*
Nyagrōdhādi cūrṇa	*Lākṣādi ghṛta*
Khadirādi vaṭī	*Karañjādya ghṛta*

Śārivādyāsava *Chandanādya taila*
Uśīrāsava *Nālpamarādi taila*

Discussion and Conclusion:

In *Chandanādya taila* both *Vaṭa* and *Nyagrōdha* are mentioned, it means they are different drugs. Regarding this *Cakrapāṇi* the commentator of *Caraka* had commented as "*Vaṭa* means the banayan tree with out *prarōha* (aerial roots), and the tree with *prarōha* (aerial roots) *Nyagrōdha*". Shellac is an important ingredient in Frenchpolish. Shellac is produced by lac insects which are parasite of banyan trees. Shellac and lac dye are both derived from the resinous secretion called lac which is produced by various insect species.

South Asian art has featured banyan trees throughout history. One example dating from the 2nd century BC is a stone pillar found in the Vidisha region (now the state of Madhya Pradesh). The pillar is carved in the shape of a banyan tree and is hung with a conch shell, a lotus flower, vases filled with coins and bags tied with string. The tree is enclosed by a latticed railing. This sculpture is believed by some to be the wish-fulfilling tree known as the *Kalpavṛkṣa* featured in the Buddhist Jataka tales. Others consider it to be the sacred tree or *Sthalavṛkṣa* hung with treasures which are associated with shrines of such deities as *Kubēra*, the God of Wealth. In the '*Bhagavad Gītā*', *Kṛṣṇa* uses the banyan tree as a symbol to describe the true meaning of life to the warrior hero *Arjuna*. Banyan is viewed by Hindus as the male plant to the closely related peepul or bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*). Ficus bengalensis, whose branches root them selves like new trees over a large area. The roots then give rise to more trunks and branches. Because of this characteristic and its longevity, this tree is considered immortal and is an integral part of the myths and legends of India. Even today, the banyan tree is the focal point of village life and the village councilholds conference under the shade of this tree. And it is considered as the national tree of India. The main focus for research has been on the use of the banyan tree for the treatment of diabetes. So far, some compounds called leucocyanids have been isolated from the tree and these compounds could be associated with the anti-diabetic activity of the plant. However, more research needs to understand completely the medicinal properties of this symbolic tree.

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सारांश

न्यग्रोध का चिकित्सिकीय-ऐतिहासिक समालोचन

सुभोस वाराणसी एवं अला नारायण

वैदिक काल से न्यग्रोध एक पवित्र औषधि-वृक्ष के रूप में विख्यात है। अंग्रेजों ने इस वृक्ष को 'बनयान' नाम दिया क्योंकि इस वृक्ष के नीचे बनिया (भारतीय व्यापारी) व्यापार करते थे। भारतवर्ष में गंगा नदी, हिमालय और न्यग्रोध वृक्ष देश की तीन प्रमुख पहचान हैं अतः यह राष्ट्रीय वृक्ष है। फाइकस अर्थात् फिग (विशिष्ट फल) एवं बेंगालन्सिस अर्थात् यह बंगाल से सम्बन्धित है। अधिकतर भारतीय इसे पवित्र वृक्ष एवं हिन्दुओं के तीन भगवान के रूप में मानते हैं। इस वृक्ष की छाल भगवान विष्णु का, मूल ब्रह्मा का एवं शाखाएँ शिव का प्रतिनिधित्व करती हैं। वैदिक काल से ही इसकी छोटी-छोटी शाखाएँ यज्ञ में प्रयुक्त की जाती थी एवं यह अपने विशाल स्वरूप के लिए विख्यात है। सिकन्दर महान् ने ७००० व्यक्तियों की सेना के आश्रय के लिए विशाल न्यग्रोध वृक्ष के नीचे शिविर डालने के लिए कहा था। वेदों के अनुसार यह पर्यावरण प्रदूषण को नियन्त्रित करता है एवं यह लाक्षा का उद्गम है। आयुर्वेद साहित्य में इसकी चिकित्सिकीय उपयोगिता भलीभांति वर्णित है। अतः इस पवित्र वृक्ष की चिकित्सिकीय उपयोगिता को पूर्णतः समझने के लिए अधिक अनुसन्धान की आवश्यकता है।