



Status of Plants as Depicted in Oṣadhisūkta of the Ṛgveda Saṁhitā: IKS Perspective

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Abstract – Plants have status of divine mother as stated by the Vedic seers. Plants and herbs serve as the medicine to overcome diseases. Indian Knowledge System (IKS) division of the Government of India initiates research on traditional wisdom. Regarding protection of plants many initiative have been taken care by many global level organizations in the modern age. In Vedic age, the seers were well-conscious on the protection of plants and herbs. So, plants are worshiped as the divine Gods who protect mankind from diseases. Āyurveda's use of plants for medicinal and nutritional purposes dates back more than five millennia. Over this long period of time, it has recognized that every plant has potential medicinal value. Its long-standing tradition has led to a deep understanding of plant properties. The thoughts developed on plants in the oṣadhisūkta of the Ṛgveda Saṁhitā are significant. So, this present study humbly attempts to discuss the status of herbs and plants from IKS perspective.

Keywords: Veda, Plants, Herbs, Mantras, Diseases, IKS, Āyurveda.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings survive with plants. Indian Literature usually glorify to the plants. In Vedic literature, plants held a revered status, viewed as sentient beings with consciousness, essential for daily life, medicine, and rituals. They were classified into categories like Vrksha (trees), Osadhi (herbs), and Virudh (creepers). Beyond their practical uses for food, wood, and medicine, plants were integrated into the spiritual realm, invoked as deities, and considered vital for the environment's well-being. The 97th sūkta of 10th Mandala in Ṛgveda named as "oṣadhisūktam" is of 23 numbers of hymns may be the brightest example in this connection. The Sanskrit word 'oṣadhi' means herb. The word 'sūktam' means a well-said. A 'sūktam' is a Vedic hymn or a collection of verses specially composed in praise of deity or group of deities, often intended to invoke blessings and prosperity. The word itself is derived from the Sanskrit prefix su(well) and the past participle ukta(said or spoken), meaning "well-said" or "well-spoken". These hymns are considered a form of divine exposure, as they were believed to be "heard" by ancient seers under divine inspiration. Sūktams are primarily devotional and function as songs of praise directed towards specific deity, such as the "oṣadhisūktam" which is dedicated to the Gods of herbs. Herbs (oṣadhis) are treated as medicinal plants in Indian tradition. More than 6,500 plant species are used for medicine by different communities across the length and breadth of country.¹ Vedic seers were well-conscious to protect such plants and herbs. In this connection, the 'oṣadhisūktam' is one of the remarkable examples towards environmental consciousness.

India has one of the oldest and richest traditions of knowledge in the world. The National Education Policy 2020(NEP–2020) encourages schools to include this traditional wisdom in the curriculum so that students

¹ See, *Indian Knowledge System*, Volume-1, Edited by Ganti S. Murthy, K. Venkataraman, p.367



can learn more about India's own culture, heritage, and ways of thinking (NEP-2020, 4.15 & 4.29). This body of traditional knowledge is called Indian Knowledge System, or IKS. In many Indian Languages, it is also known as Bhāratīya Jñāna Paramparā. So, this is an investigation from the IKS point of views to explore the ancient Indian thoughts on plants emerged in Vedic Literature.

2. SCOPE AND RELEVANCE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The Ṛgveda Samhitā, which is more commonly known as the Ṛgveda is the oldest well-preserved and fairly extensive record of man's religious-literary activities that has become available so far. IKS gives immense importance on consciousness regarding protection of plants as well as the Vedic Literature. From this point of view the thought and concept derived from Vedic literature create consciousness among peoples towards protection of medicinal plants. Vedic literature gives prestigious status to oṣadhis 'herbs' as the mothers of mankind. This may be a significant contribution to the environmental consciousness. Present study is a humble attempt to discuss the status and relevance of herbs as depicted in the Ṛgveda especially in 'oṣadhisūkta'. Some Vedic words located in the mantras are illustrated for the purpose of this study. The English translations of mantras are collected according to H.H. Wilson and Bhāṣya of Sāyaṇācārya.² The illustrations of Vedic mantras provide scope for study of ancient Indian plant science and also have the relevance in the present society.

3. PLACES TO WHICH HERBS ARE APPLIED

या ओषधीः पूर्वा जाता देवेभ्यस्त्रियुगं पुरा ।

मनै नु बभ्रुणामहं शतं धामानि सप्त च ॥³

[yā oṣadhīḥ pūrvā jātā devebhyastriyugam purā |

mania nu babhruṇāmaham śatam dhāmāni ca ||]

The word "dhāmāni" which Sāyaṇa explains as the places to which herbs may be applied by way of unction, friction, sprinkling, etc. The word devebhyah may mean "the shining season". The word 'tri-yugam' may mean "the three seasons, the spring, the rains, and the autumn. The word 'babhrūṇām' may mean brown-tinted plants. These plants are generated for the gods before the three ages. Plants are applied in many ways for the treatment of diseases.⁴ Traditional Medicinal Plants serves as a vital companion, focusing on the natural pharmacopeia and bridging traditional botanical wisdom with modern scientific validation. However, this information is not intended as a substantive for formal medicine care but only aimed at providing primary knowledge about the medicinal plants of Āyurveda.

4. HUNDRED FUNCTIONS OF HERBS

The Vedic seer prays to these significant plants as the mother of mankind. The prayer goes like this,

शतं वो अम्ब धामानि सहस्रमुत वो रुहः ।

²See, Ṛgveda Samhitā(English translation according to H.H.Wilson and Bhāṣya of Sāyaṇācārya), Edited and Revised with an exhaustive Introduction and notes by Ravi Prakash Arya and K.L. Joshi, Vol.IV, Parimala Publication, Delhi, Sixth Reprint Edition, 2022

³ Ṛgveda Samhitā, Maṇḍala-10, Sūkta -97, Mantra - 1

⁴ See, Gardner, Jo Ann. *Living with Herbs: A Treasury of Useful Plants for the Home and Garden*. The Countryman Press, 2014.



अथा शतक्रत्वो यूयमिमं मे अगदं कृत ॥⁵

[śataṁ vo amba dhāmani sahasramuta vo ruhaḥ |

adhā śakratvo yūyamimam me agadam kṛta ||]

The Vedic seer praises the herbs as the Mother of mankind. Plants have hundred applications and a thousand –fold growth. Plants and herbs have hundred functions which make the people free from diseases. Āyurveda, rooted in ancient ṛṣis studies of pattern underlying nature, says that the same fundamental principles govern both the microcosm and the macrocosm. According to this understanding, humans, animals, plants and the world are composed of the same basic elements and follow the same physical laws. Therefore, Āyurveda's fundamental principles and concepts are applicable to human, animals and plants. Ancient Indians gave equal importance to the health of humans, animals and plants, recognizing their interdependence.

5. PLANTS LIKE VICTORIOUS HORSES

Plants cause happiness for a person suffering from diseases. Medicinal flowers and fruits have vital role to overcome diseases. Vedic seers have rightly mentioned the same thought in the following mantras.

ओषधीः प्रतिमोदध्वं पुष्पवतीः प्रसूवरीः ।

अश्वा इव सजित्वरीर्वीरुधः पारयिष्णवः ॥⁶

[oṣadhīḥ pratimodadhvaṁ puṣpavatīḥ prasūvarīḥ |

aśvā iva sajitvarīrvīrudhaḥ pārayiṣṇavaḥ ||]

Plants are like victorious horses. Bearing abundant flowers and fruits, plants get victory over diseases. A significant population across the globe is depending upon the traditional system of medicines for healthcare. Use of plant-based drugs is a common feature in these systems of medicine. Āyurveda, originated from 15th Century BCE uses more than 1500 medicinal plants. The sages of Āyurveda built a clear logical framework of the pharmacological basis of these plant drugs. Most of the plant drugs and the treatment procedures explained in Āyurveda are relevant for contemporary healthcare needs. Many of them are simple and can be practiced at the household level for the purpose of primary healthcare.⁷ The Vedic thought on plants in term of healthcare benefit may be taken significant as well as relevant for the society. This kind of thought brings consciousness and also contributes to the Indian Knowledge System.

6. PLANTS AS THE DIVINE MOTHERS OF MANKIND

Moreover, the following hymn rightly represents plants as the divine mothers of mankind.

ओषधीरिति मातरस्तद्वो देवीरूपं ब्रुवे ।

सनेयमश्वं गां वास आत्मानं तव पूरुष ॥⁸

[oṣadhīriti mātaraṣṭadvō devīrūpo bruve |

⁵ Ṛgveda Samhitā, Maṇḍala-10, Sūkta -97, Mantra - 2

⁶ Ṛgveda Samhitā, Maṇḍala-10, Sūkta -97, Mantra - 3

⁷ See, Indian Knowledge System, Volume-1, p.395

⁸ Ṛgveda Samhitā, Maṇḍala-10, Sūkta -97, Mantra - 4



sanayemaśvaṁ gaṁ vāsa ātmānaṁ tava pūruṣa ||]

No doubt that the chanting of the mantras of 'oṣadhiṣṭam' is benefited for the whole human being. The significant concept hidden in this mantra is that the herbs have multiple functions and application which is accepted by the modern scientists of medical science. Herbal medicine has long been contrasted to modern medicine in terms of a holistic approach to healing, ritualistic theories of health and illness, and an emphasis on the body's innate self-healing capacities.⁹ The herbal remedies were safe according to the medical research. Our experience indicates that in some countries, herbs more commonly used vary depending on which products are marketed and on regional practices. Another recent trend in Western countries involves adding herbs to energy drinks and weight loss and nutritional products.¹⁰ Research review highlights the most important medicinal plants which have been used in Iran and China as traditional herbal medicines for hundreds of years due to their tremendous antioxidant activities.¹¹ Therefore, plant plays the role of a mother globally in term of medicine. Such Vedic thought on plants significantly contribute a lot to the Indian Knowledge System. Thinking mostly, it brings consciousness among the modern society towards the protection of plants and herbs.

7. AŚVATTHA AND PALĀŚA AS THE RESIDENCE OF PLANTS

The Aśvattha and Palāśa trees bear a chief part in sacrifices and are therefore said to be the abode of plants. The vessels in which the offerings are presented are made of the wood of these two. The Aśvattha is the Ficus Religiosa and the Palāśa is the Butea Frondosa.

अश्वत्थे वो निषदनं पर्णे वो वसतिष्कृता ।

गोभाज इत्किलासथ यत्सनवथ पूरुषम् ॥¹²

[aśvatthe vo niṣadanaṁ parṇe vo vasatiṣkṛtā |

gobhāja itkalāsatha yatsanavatha pūruṣam ||]

According to this Vedic mantra, the existences of the Gods of herbs are found in Aśvattha and Palāśa tree. The medico-historical importance is also highlighted by the modern researchers. Aśvattha is a tree which has the medicinal value and religious importance. It is an inhabitant of India and is sacred for Hindus and Buddhists all over the world. It is well described in ancient medical and non-medical literature.¹³ The research review also reveals about F. religiosa that comprises numerous medical constituents and dispenses various pharmacological activities.¹⁴ The medico-historical aspects of Palāśa tree are significant in Indian Medical tradition.¹⁵ The botanical and physiochemical investigation proves the medicinal importance of the plant Palāśa. This plant (Butea monosperma) is extensively used in Ayurveda

⁹ See, Wahlberg, Ayo. "Pathways to plausibility: when herbs become pills." *BioSocieties* 3.1 (2008): 37-56.

¹⁰ See, Rivera, J. O., A. M. Loya, and R. J. A. I. M. Ceballos. "Use of herbal medicines and implications for conventional drug therapy medical sciences." *Altern Integ Med* 2.6 (2013): 1-6.

¹¹ See, Shahrajabian, Mohamad H., Qi Cheng, and Wenli Sun. "The most important medicinal herbs and plants in traditional Chinese and Iranian medicinal sciences with antioxidant activities." *Letters in Drug Design & Discovery* 20.9 (2023): 1171-1184.

¹² Ṛgveda Samhitā, Maṇḍala-10, Sūkta -97, Mantra - 5

¹³ See, Prasad, P. V. V., et al. "Medico-historical study of "aśvattha"(sacred fig tree)." *Journal of Indian Medical Heritage* 36.1 (2006): 1-20.

¹⁴ See, Sharma, Vishnu, et al. "A review on Ficus religiosa (Sacred Fig)." *Int J Res Anal Rev* 6 (2019): 901-906.

¹⁵ See, Prasad, P. V. V., et al. "PALĀŚA (BUTEA MONOSPERMA (LAMK.) TAUB.) AND ITS MEDICO-HISTORICAL STUDY." *Journal of Indian Medical Heritage* 36.2 (2006): 117-132.

and other branches of medical sciences.¹⁶ So, these two plants having Āyurvedic important also contribute to the Indian Knowledge System.

8. PLANTS LIKE KINGS ASSEMBLED IN BATTLE

The trees create shade for others while standing in the sun themselves and they bear fruits for the sake of others. Trees are indeed like the virtuous person and they fight against the diseases. According to the Indian Knowledge System, the Vedic sage is designated as physician, the destroyer of evil spirits and disease. It is rightly described in oṣadhisūkta of Ṛgveda that where the variety of plants are congregated like kings assembled in battle, there the sage is designated as physician. Congregation of various plants and herbs in a place causes the absence of diseases. So, indirectly the following mantras inspire us to work for mass plantation for the betterment of mankind.

यत्रौषधीः समग्मत राजानः समिताविव ।

विप्रः स उच्यते भिषग्रक्षोहामीवचातनः ॥¹⁷

[yatrauṣadhīḥ samagmata rājānaḥ samitāviva |

vipraḥ sa ucyate bhiṣagrakṣohāmīvacātanaḥ ||]

Indian Knowledge System always thinks about the welfare of the World and focus on the protection of environment for present and future generation.

9. ADMIRATION FOR PLANTS

Gods of Plants have significant reputation in Vedic Literature. Aśvāvatī, Somāvatī, Urjayantī and Udajasā are treated as the Goddess in the Ṛgveda Samhitā. Hence, these four notable plants are praised through the Mantras as furnished below.

अश्वावतीं सोमावतीमूर्जयन्तीमुदोजसम् ।

आवित्सि सर्वा ओषधीरस्मा अरिष्टतातये ॥¹⁸

[aśvāvatīm somāvatīmūrjayantīmudojasam |

āvitsi sarvā oṣadhīrasmā ariṣṭatātaye ||]

The purpose of praise to plants is to overcome the diseases. According to Sāyaṇa, the above mentioned plants have principal role in treatment science in Vedic tradition. Mahīdhara explains Aśvāvatī as the giver of horses or of wealth and the Somāvatī as the yielder of Soma, the giver of strength or life and the restorer of vigor. The last two– Urjayantī and Udajasā might be termed “tonic” and “stimulant” respectively. Ancient herbal science was based on philosophical and spiritual foundation.

10. THE VIRTUES OF THE PLANTS

¹⁶See, Jaiswal, A. K., and J. Singh. "Butea monosperma and lac cultivation." *Ranchi: ICAR-indian Institute of Natural Resins and Gums* (2015).

¹⁷Ṛgveda Samhitā, Maṇḍala-10, Sūkta -97, Mantra - 6

¹⁸Ṛgveda Samhitā, Maṇḍala-10, Sūkta -97, Mantra - 7



Some literary presentations are made by the Vedic seers showing the significant status of plants and herbs in the mantras of the oṣadhisūkta in the Ṛgveda. The following hymns enlighten the status of plants and herbs.

उच्छुष्मा ओषधीनां गावो गोष्ठादिवेरते ।
धनं सनिष्यन्तीनामात्मानं तव पूरुष ॥
इष्कृतिर्नाम वो माताथो यूयं स्थ निष्कृतीः ।
सीराः पतत्रिणीः स्थन यदामयति निष्कृथ ॥
अति विश्वाः परिष्ठाः स्तेन इव व्रजमक्रमुः ।
ओषधीः प्राचुच्यवुर्यत्किं च तन्वो३ रपः ॥
यदिमा वाजयन्नहमोषधीर्हस्त आदधे ।
आत्मा यक्ष्मस्य नश्यति पुरा जीवगृभो यथा॥
यस्यौषधीः प्रसर्पथाङ्गमङ्गं परुषपरुः ।
ततो यक्ष्मं वि बाधध्व उग्रो मध्यमशीरिव ॥
साकं यक्ष्म प्र पत चाषेण किकिदीविना ।
साकं वातस्य ध्राज्या साकं नश्य निहाकया ॥

[ucchuṣmā oṣdhīnām gāvo goṣṭhādiverate |
dhanam saniṣyantīnāmātmānam tava pūruṣa ||
iṣkṛtirnāma vo mātātho yūyam stha niṣkṛtī |
sīrāḥ patatrinīḥ sthana yadāmayati niṣkṛtha ||
ati viśvāḥ pariṣṭhāḥ stena iva vrajamakramuḥ |
oṣadhīḥ prācucyavuryatkiṁ ca tanvo3 rapaḥ ||
yadimā vājayannahamoṣadhīrhasta ādadhe |
Ātmā yakṣmasya naśyati purā jīvagṛbho yathā ||
yasyauṣadhīḥ prasarpataṅgamaṅgam paruṣparuḥ |
tato yakṣmam vi bādhadhva ugro madhyamaśīriva ||
sākam vātasya pra pata caṣeṇa kikiḍivinā |
sākam vātasya dhrājyā sākam naśya nihākayā ||]¹⁹

The virtues of the plants which are desirous of bestowing wealth issue from them, man, towards your body like cattle from the pen. Verily Iṣkṛtī is your mother, therefore are you also Niṣkṛtī, the remedy of disease. Iṣkṛtī is, according to Sāyaṇa, the same as Niṣkṛtī, the remedy of disease. The universal all-pervading plants overcome diseases as a thief attacks a cowshed; they drive out whatever infirmity of body there may be. The literary translation of the mantras goes like this,

¹⁹ Ṛgveda, Maṇḍala-10, Sūkta-97, Mantra (9-13)



"As soon as I take these plants in my hand making the sick man strong, the soul of malady perishes before their application as life is driven away from the presence of the seizer of life. From him, oh plants, in which you creep from limb to limb, from joint to joint, you drive away disease like a mighty prince stationed in the midst of his host. Fly forth, sickness, with the jay, with the blue jay, with the velocity of wind, perishes along with the iguana."

अन्या वो अन्यामवत्वन्यान्यस्या उपावत ।

ताः सर्वाः संविदाना इदं मे प्रावता वचः ॥

याः फलिनीर्या अफला अपुष्पा याश्च पुष्पिणीः ।

बृहस्पतिप्रसूतास्ता नो मुञ्चन्त्वंहसः ॥

मुञ्चन्तु मा शपथ्याउदथो वरुण्यादुत ।

अथो यमस्य पद्बीशात्सर्वस्माद्देवकिल्बिषात् ॥

[anyā vo anyāmavatvanyānyasyā upāvata]

tāḥ sarvāḥ saṁvidānā idaṁ me prāvatā vacaḥ ॥

yāḥ phalinīryā aphalā apuṣpā yāśca puṣpiṇīḥ ।

bṛhaspatiprasūtāstā no muñcantvamhasaḥ ॥

muñcantu mā śapathyā3datho varuṇyāduta ।

atho yamasya paḍbīśātsarvasmāddevakilbiṣāt ॥]

[Let each of you, plants, go to the other, approach the one (to the vicinity) of the other; thus being all mutually joined together, attend to this my speech. Whether bearing fruits or barren, whether flowering or flowerless, May they, the progeny of Bṛhaspati, liberate us from sin. May they liberate me from the sin produced by curse, from the sin caused by Varuṇa, from the fetters of Yama, from all guilt caused by the gods?]²⁰

11. SOMA AS THE KING OF PLANTS

Soma was stated to be a divine and sacred plant, with its miraculous properties, which enlightened the worshipper and the person who drank its juice. Soma-plant holds the status of king among the medicinal plants.²¹ In the R̥gveda, which consist of 10 Maṇḍala or books, the total number of hymns are 10,552, out of which 1028 verses are on Soma. It was a common idea in the last century, and one which can be found even today that Soma was a drink which led to happiness, and drugs which produce such an extraordinary state of mind have always been objects of curiosity. Therefore, the search for the plant which was used by the Indo-Iranian peoples in their solemn rituals was never abandoned; although the variety of candidates brought forward made the question look unsolvable. Some of the strong drugs suggested for the original Soma had to meet with statements from the R̥gveda or Āvesta which ran contrary to their shape or properties. The effects of others on the human mind are so unspectacular that it was difficult to accept

²⁰ R̥gveda Saṁhitā, Maṇḍala-10, Sūkta-97, Mantras-14-16

²¹ See, Shah, N. C. "The discovery and mystery of soma plant and its identification." *Scitech J* 1.11 (2014): 26-36.



them as the plant so highly praised in ancient times.²² The amount of research carried out on Soma drinking in the Āyurveda tops the list among all the efforts made by Aryans to explore the benefits of the plant.²³ The hymns furnished below of the oṣadhisūkta of the Ṛgveda are highly suggestive in support of the significant position of this plant in Indian Knowledge System (IKS).

अवपतन्तीरवदन्दिव ओषधयस्परि ।

यं जीवमश्नुवामहै न स रिष्याति पूरुषः ॥

या ओषधीः सोमराजीर्बह्वीः शतविचक्षणाः ।

तासां त्वमस्युत्तमार्गं कामाय शं हृदे ॥

या ओषधीः सोमराजीर्विच्छिताः पृथिवीमनु ।

बृहस्पतिप्रसूता अस्यै सं दत्त वीर्यम् ॥

मा वो रिषत्खनिता यस्मै चाहं खनामि वः ।

द्विपच्चतुष्पदस्माकं सर्वमस्त्वनातुरम् ॥

याश्चेदमुपशृण्वन्ति याश्च दूरं परागताः ।

सर्वाः सङ्गत्य वीरुधोऽस्यै सं दत्त वीर्यम् ॥

ओषधयः सं वदन्ते सोमेन सह राजा ।

यस्मै कृणोति ब्राह्मणस्तं राजन् पारयामसि ॥

त्वमुत्तमास्योषधे तव वृक्षा उपस्तयः ।

उपस्तिरस्तु सोऽस्माकं यो अस्मां अभिदासति ॥

[avapatantīravadandiva oṣadhaspari |

yam jīvamaśnuvāmahai na sa riṣyāti pūruṣaḥ ||

yā oṣadhīḥ somarājīr̥bahvīḥ śatavicakṣaṇāḥ |

tāsām tvamasyuttamāraṁ kāmāya śam hṛde ||

yā oṣadhīḥ somarājīr̥viṣṭhitāḥ pṛthivīmanu |

bṛhaspatiprasūtā asyai sam data vīryam ||

mā vo riṣatkhaniṭā yasmai cāham khanāmi vaḥ |

dvipaccatuṣpadasmākaṁ sarvamastvanārturam ||

yāścedamupaśṛṇvanti yāśca dūraṁ parāgatāḥ |

sarvāḥ saṅgatyā vīrudho'syai sam data vīryam ||

oṣadhyāḥ sam vadante somena saha rājñā |

yasmai kṛṇoti brāhmaṇastam rājan pārayāmasi ||

²² See, Falk, Harry. "Soma I and II." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 52.1 (1989): 77-90.

²³ See, Padhy, Sachidananda, and Santosh Kumar Dash. "The soma drinker of ancient India: An ethno-botanical retrospection." *Journal of Human Ecology* 15.1 (2004): 19-26.



tvamuttamāsyōṣadhe tava vṛkṣā upastayaḥ |
upastirastu so3'smākaṁ yo asmā abhidāsati ||]

[The plants, falling from heaven, said, "The man, who living we pervade, will not perish." The plants which have the Soma for their king and are numerous and all-seeking of them you (O Soma-plant) are the best; be very bountiful to the affectionate heart. Plants which have the Soma for your king, who are scattered over the earth, the offspring of Bṛhaspati, give strength to this infirm body. Let the digger not hurt you, not the sick person for whom I dig you up; may all my bipeds and quadrupeds be free from disease. Both the plants that hear this prayer and those which are removed far off, all coming together, give strength to this infirm body. All the plants, together with Soma their king, declare, "We save him, O king, to whom the Brāhmaṇa administers us. You (Soma) are the best of plants, to you all trees are prostrate; may he be prostrate to us, who attacks us.]²⁴

The above mantras are used as prayer for plants. Through this prayer all the bipeds and quadrupeds will be free from diseases. Plants will make our infirm body strong and healthy. Soma-plant is the best among all the medicinal plants. So, this plant is accepted as the king of plants. In Indic knowledge system, the Brāhmaṇa is one of the designations given to the surgeon who has the efficient knowledge about medicinal plants.²⁵

12. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

From the above discussion, it is noted that plants are the divine mother of mankind. Such status has been given to the plants by our ancient wisdom to save the earth. The plants have a great role in the ancient medical science as well as in the modern science of treatment. The Ṛgveda is the first literature in Indic Knowledge System. In which the oṣadhiṣkta may be attested as a chapter of human consciousness towards the plants and herbs. Herbs and plants have the capacity to eradicate various diseases from society. It may be declared that a well-established and plant-based treatment science was developed in Vedic period. The holistic science of well-being originated from the plants and herbs. The distant origin of Āyurveda makes its beginnings difficult to determine. However, one can confidently say that codified Āyurveda would be at least 4000 years old or 1500 years prior to Hippocrates, the father of Western medicine. According to Caraka Saṁhitā, the terrestrial history of Āyurveda began when Sage Bharadvāja passed down his divinely obtained knowledge to other sages for the benefit of all living beings.²⁶ The Ṛgveda preserves pure mantras for environmental consciousness. The holistic integration of these advancements with socio-cultural aspects of "plants like our mother" offers timeless lessons for modern science and technology. The literary description available in the oṣadhisūkta glorify to the plants and herbs. The Āyurvedic application based on herbs and plants as reflected in this sūkta produce new idea of traditional research trend. All the above thoughts derived from the Vedic mantras lead to an ecological consciousnesses.

13. CONCLUSION

This is a brief survey of references in Vedic literature to various trees and plants pointing to the scope and necessity of further research in the field. The analysis, which follows this, is confined to some selected

²⁴ *Rgveda Saṁhitā, Maṇḍala-10, Sūkta-97, Mantras-17-23*

²⁵ See, *Sāyaṇabhāṣya, oṣadhisāmarthyajñō brāhmaṇo vaidyaḥ* | *Rgveda Saṁhitā-10 .97.22*

²⁶ See, *Indian Knowledge System, Vol.1, p.296*



aspects such as ritualistic, religious, literary, and socio-cultural. Given the remote age in which the Vedic literature evolved, the identification of plants and herbs does pose a challenge especially due to limited descriptions of their characteristic features. However, a thorough study of this literature by locating multiple references or descriptions of trees and plants across both Vedic and post-Vedic literature and analyzing facts from multifarious angles such as geographical, botanical, and cultural ones could indeed be much beneficial. It could throw up a mine of information and insight useful to researchers of Botany, Agriculture, Cultural Studies, Ecology, and Indic knowledge. The IKS is not just about old texts, it is about how knowledge is passed down and remains relevant today. Although the word "IKS" is new, the knowledge is very old and continues to grow. As, the great Sanskrit poet Kālidāsa rightly said in his literature that, "not all things old are excellent, just as not new things are contemptible" which suggests that wise people evaluate both old and new works based on their merit, while fools blindly follow the opinions of others.²⁷

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²⁷ See, *purāṇamityeva na sādhu sarvam.....* | | 'Malavikāgnimitra' of Kālidāsa, Act-1.2