Research Paper

Parijat (Nyctanthes arbor-tristis L.): A Holy tree of India with special reference to medicinal importance

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ABSTRACT

Parijat (Nyctanthes arbor-tristis L.) is a large shrub or small tree across 10 meters height known as Harsingar or night Jasmine belongs to family Oleaceae. Parijat is a holy tree of India since the time of Lord Krishna which is found as an ornamental plant in Indian garden and temple sides. According to mythology, Parijat tree was planted in heaven by Lord Indra. Lord Krishna brought parijat to earth for Goddess Satyabhama from heaven in Dwapar Yuga. The flowers of Parijat are very fragrant, white colored with small petals, which also adorns Lord Hari that is why Parijat is also called Harsingar. The flowers are considered as the jewels of Gods. Along with worship tree, Parijat is a highly traditional medicinal plant; therefore religious people of India worship this tree as well as use their flowers, stem, leaves, and roots to treat various diseases. In the present review, a mythical tree brought from heaven, its usefulness, and medicinal importance are discussed based on available database literature and evidence which can help in providing cultural, religious and medicinal knowledge about the Parijat plant of India.

Key words: Harsingar, Hindu faith, holy tree, medicinal plant, Oleaceae.

INTRODUCTION

Parijat (Nyctanthes arbor-tristis) is a terrestrial, woody, large shrub or indigenous small tree that belongs to Oleaceae (Nyctanthaceae) family. It is grown in gardens, roadside and temple side in India and it is about 10 m in height (Figure 1). It is known as night Jasmine or coral Jasmine in English and Parijatha in Sanskrit. In Bengali, it is also known Shefali. This plant, which is cultivated all over India, is known by different names in every province. It is endemic to India and Nepal’s subtropical Himalayas, and is widely dispersed in sub-Himalayan regions and southwards to the Godavari and is predominantly native to southern Asia (Sandhar et al., 2018). Parijat’s geographical range includes northern India, southern Nepal and northern Pakistan and the south-east of Thailand, as well as other places of the world (Hiremath et al., 2016; Hara et al., 2007). In India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Indonesia, night jasmine is commonly grown near Hindu temples (Hiremath et al., 2016). The flower of Parijat is the official flower of the state of west Bengal, India.

According to Hindu mythology, the Parijat tree was planted in heaven by Devraj Indra. Recently, at the time of foundation stone laying of Lord Shri Ram temple in Ayodhya of Uttar Pradesh state, the Parijat plant was specially planted by the Prime Minister of India in the courtyard of the temple. Parijat (Nyctanthes arbor-tristis) commonly known as Harsingar in Hindi is the earthly tree which is in contention to be identified as the mythical Parijat. In English, Harsingar is known as Nyctanthes arbor-tristis (Nycta + anthos arbor + tristis) which means night flowering sad tree. Harsingara Hindi word derived from its mother language Sanskrit meaning deity’s adornment connected to floral offering by Hindus (Jha, 2021). Leaves are opposite, simple, about 5-10 cm long and 2-6 cm broad, flowers have a white colour, brilliant, and highly fragrant, stem is woody and branched, bark is rough, greenish or flaky grey, fruit is brown in colour, round to heart-shaped and flat divided in to two section each containing single seed.
**MYTHOLOGICAL BELIEF OF PARIJAT**

Parijat plant holds a very important place in Hindu beliefs. In Hindu scriptures, it has been kept in the category of very auspicious and sacred tree. Parijat tree was planted in heaven by Lord Indra and Lord Krishna brought parijat to earth for Goddess Satyabhama (wife of Lord Krishna) from heaven. Parijat is god tree which was originated from the churning of the ocean (Kauroshy, 2021; Sharma and Nighantu, 2004). Parijat tree is called divine tree in which flowers bloom in just one month of the year but surprisingly when the flowers fall from the tree, they fall far away, not close to the tree. It is therefore the only flower that can be offered to the Gods after picking it up from the ground. In India, they bloom during pooja time of Navaratra and Diwali in the months of Ashwin and Kartik. Flowers have a special place in the worship of God. Flowers are considered sacred and symbols of purity, hence they are very pleasing to the deities. Parijat flowers are white colored with five to eight lobbéd corollas having orange color in the center. The flowers were opened at dusk and finishing at early morning, thus, making a carpet of flowers in the morning. Parijat flowers are not only very aromatic but they are also used as medicine. Various stories related to the Parijat tree are also part of our mythological history. According to mythology, Parijat is one of the five trees of heaven. Its etymology can be traced to the words pari and jat meaning heavenly and produced.

According to this myth, Princess Parijataka had fallen in love with Sun god but the both could not reconcile thus Parijataka committed suicide and a Parijat tree grew from her ashes. She blooms only at night because she can't take seeing his love during the day, and she sheds the flowers as tears before the sun rises, spreading their scent throughout the day (Gupta et al., 2001; Utkarsh Patel, 2021). According to Hindu mythology, Goddess Lakshmi is very love of Parijat flowers. This is the reason why Parijat flowers are offered to Goddess Lakshmi at the time of worship. It is believed that the mother is pleased with its offerings. Although the flowers of Parijat should not be plucked and offered for worship, the flowers that have fallen from the trees should be picked up and offered to God (Jha, 2021; Kauroshy, 2021). The Ramayana and the Bhagwad Gita are holy Hindu texts, most of the events are believed to have been centered around the modern Uttar Pradesh. According to another legend, Kunti expressed a desire to her son Arjuna to offer Parijat flowers to Shiva during the worship of Shiva. On this instruction, Arjun brought the entire Parijat tree from Dwarka and installed it in Kintoor village, now this village is located in Barabanki district of Uttar pradesh state (Kauroshy, 2021). But according to studies on this plant by Jha (2021), this tree which planted in Kintoor (Barabanki) is in dispute for being established as a parijat tree, because it is considered to be a Baobab (Adansonia digitata L.) of African origin. But the belief in Parijat (Harsingar) has existed longer than the introduction of
Baobab. Further research on this topic is needed to address the lack of clarity.

**PHYTOCONSTITUENTS AND PHARMACOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES**

In previous studies by several researcher reported phytocannabinoids in Nyctanthes arbor-tristis including polysaccharides, glycosides, hentylpropanoid glycoside, benzoic acid, nyctanthis acid, Friedelin and oleanolic acid, alkaloids, phlobatanins, terpenoids and cardiac glycosides. Iridoid glucosides and 6-ß-hydroxyloganin has also been isolated from this plant (Rathor et al., 2007). Flowers contain essential oils, mannitol, tannin and glucose. Its roots are composed of alkaloids, tannins and glucosides (Kritkar et al., 1993; Girach et al., 1994). Leaves contain d-mannitol, ß-sitosterol, flavanol glycosides, astragaline, nicotiflorin, oleanolic acid, nyctanthis acid, tannic acid, ascobic acid, methyl salicylate, res cinub substances, amorphous glycoside, amorphous resin, carotene, friedeline, lupeol, mannitol, glucose, fructose, iridoid glycosides, benzoic acid. All the important phytoconstituents are being used in Ayurvedic medication and reported for sc radical, arthritis, fevers, and various painful conditions and as a laxative, orange tubular calyx of the flower contains carotenoids (Mathuram and Kundu, 1991). Flowers contain modified diterpenoid nyctanthin, flavonoids, anthocyanins (Khatune et al., 2003). Whole plant of Parijat (Nyctanthes arbor-tristis) has many pharmacological activities screened from leaves, stem, bark and seeds crude extracts reported by many researchers including Antimicrobial activity, Antiarthritic activity, Antidiabestic activity, Antibacterial activity, Antihelmintic activity, Analgesic and Antiinflammatory, Antimicrobial activity, Antioxidant activity, Antispasmodic activity, Antiviral activity, Immunistimulant activity, Anticancer activity and Antimalarial activity (Kakoti et al., 2013; Meshram et al., 2012; Parekh and Soni, 2020; Bhalakiya and Modi, 2019; Agrawal and Pal, 2013). Nyctanthis arbor-tristis has also been screened for antihistaminic activity, analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antipyretic, antiulcer, antihelmintic, amebcidial, antipanosomal to antidepressants and immunomodulatory activity (Sasmal et al., 2007).

**MEDICINAL IMPORTANCE OF PARIJAT TREE**

Along with holy tree, Parijat is a divine and highly traditional medicinal plant known for enormous medicinal value which is mentioned in Hindu literature. Because each portion of the parijat plant has varied medicinal capabilities and benefits, it can be commercially exploited. It is today regarded as a valuable source of several unique compounds for the curing of various ailments as well as the production of some industrial products (Jain and Pandey, 2016). Broad spectrum medical importance of parijat plant is described in various Ayurvedic literatures. The medicinal value of Nyctanthes arbor-tristis has been documented in numerous Ayurvedic literatures for the treatment of a variety of mental and physical ailments (Kumari and Dubey, 2020). This plant has been utilized as an Ayurvedic medication in the treatment of numerous ailments since ancient times. Flowers of Parijat are used from ancient time to cure skin diseases, headache and hair growth; leaves paste and leaves juice are used in treatment of ring worm, intestinal worm and in dry cough; seed are used in Bavasir, obstinate fever, skin diseases, and in dandruff; stem bark decoction are used to cure cough and cold, malaria, internal swelling and for fractured bones (Singh et al., 2020). Entire plant of Parijat (Nyctanthes arbor-tristis) have a great medicinal value as an anti-microbacterial, antimarial, anti-inflammatory, anesthetic, antioxidant, anti-diabetic and antiallergy activity which is used in herbal treatment for the medication of many diseases including scatica, internal worm infections, rheumatism, chronic fever, asthma, dyspepsia, bronchitis, ulcer, dysentery, skin diseases, cough, and fever etc (Bhalakiya and Modi, 2019; Shrivastava and Bharadwaj, 2018).

This plant’s roots are used to treat emaciation, while its stem bark is used to treat diarrhoea, palate ulcers, and internal injuries (Gupta et al., 2006). Nyctanthes arbor-tristis leaves are widely used in tribal and Ayurvedic medicine to treat a variety of ailments, including cough, rheumatism, scatica, chronic fever, internal worm infections, asthma, inflammations, dyspepsia, dermatopathy, bronchitis, constipation, hepatitis, grey hair, and baldness (Kuvaev and Binova, 1960; Saxena et al., 1987). Leaf juice of Parijat with honey is used for the medication of cough and paste with honey is used for curing fever, high blood pressure and diabetes (Bhalakiya and Modi, 2019). Parijat leaves have a harsh and pungent flavour. It's used to treat fevers, fungal skin infections, and it's also an antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, and antihelmentic. Scatica, rheumatism, and fever are all treated with leaf juice. The fresh leaves are often utilized in homeopathic medicine production. This tree's bark is used to treat eye disorders, ulcers, and as an expectorant. Gum bleeding can be treated with a bark decoction. The bitter and astringent blossoms are used to treat ocular problems and as a carminative (Mother herbs, 2021). Fever and rheumatism can be treated with parijat leaves, while chronic fever can be treated with fresh juice of the leaves mixed with honey. The juice of its leaves with sugar is given to children to treat intestinal worms. The juice of its flowers is used as an anti-allergic and immune-stimulant (Dhiman, 2006). Overall, Parijat is a religious plant, as well as being associated with the faith of Hindus, it is an essential natural remedy.

**CONCLUSION**

The mythological and holy tree of India, Parijat (Nyctanthes
Nyctanthes arbor-tristis, has been used for various medical and domestic uses for over a thousand years. It is considered as one of the most useful conventional medicinal plant in India that yields not only for unique Ayurvedic and medicinal products but also has industrial importance. It was planted in heaven by Lord Indra and it was originated from the churning of the ocean. The flowers of Parijat opened during the Navaratna and Diwali. White fragrant flowers of Parijat have a special place in the worship of God. Parijat can be found in several Hindu mythological stories and scriptures. Since, Parijat plant holds a very important place in Hindu beliefs. Therefore, Parijat plant has a special place in the worship of God. Parijat plant holds a very important place in the Navaratra and Diwali.


