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Poster · November 2015

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.1.1408.2804

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Nakshatra Garden: An ancient approach to conserve biodiversity

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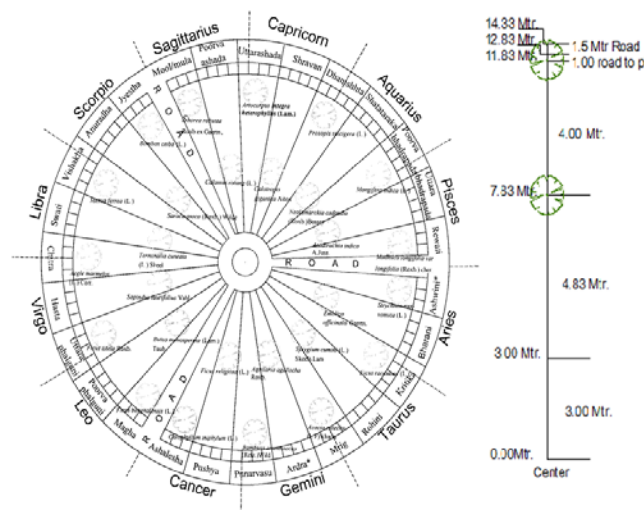
Introduction: Constellation is a group of stars seen to represent a mythical figure or pattern in the sky. Eighty such groups are known. The Hindu literature describes 27 such stars combinations or “Nakshatras”. The Sanskrit word Nakshatra means “that which does not decay”. Twenty seven nakshatras are distributed over 12 months. Every nakshatra has a symbolic tree or plant that defines its connection with eternal nature. Each one of them has myriad of medicinal, aesthetic and economic value which can be explored for additional health benefits. The trees are of course all indigenous and suit the local environment. Due to number of developmental activities, the forests and thereby tree wealth is dwindling fast. Plantation of nakshatra vriksh by each of the individual would definitely assist in biodiversity conservation. Nakshatra vriksh is an ancient conservation practice when man was aware of scientific value of trees. Therefore plantation of plants of your birth nakshatra can be useful in conservation of biodiversity on earth. In short this is an ancient way of plant adoption for conserving biodiversity on earth. To add, each plant has its own “micro-diversity” of microbes, butterflies, birds and humans too. Interestingly, there are five birds such as vulture, peacock, owl, cock and crow associated with 27 nakshatras. This Pancha-PakshiShastra is also popular in South India.

PRIMARY PLANT SPECIES

Sr. No	NAKSHATRA	PLANT SPECIES	MEDICINAL AND OTHER PROPERTIES
1	Ashwini*	Kuchala (poison nut) <i>Strychnos-nux-vomica</i> (L.)	Seeds- alkaloid strychnine works on nervous, respiratory and circulatory system nux vomica of H
2	Bharani	Amla, indian gooseberry <i>Emblica officinalis</i> Gaertn.	Fruits - rejuvenating, anti-ageing known as rasayan, increases body resistance and hair growth
3	Kritika	Cluster fig, umbar <i>Ficus racemosa</i> (L.)	Bark - helps wound healing
4	Rohini	Jamun, jambul <i>Syzygium cumini</i> (L.) Skeels.Lam	Bark – astringent effective against diarrhea Seeds - anti-diabetic, Fruits – anti-inflammatory
5	Mrig	Khair, cutch tree <i>Acacia catechu</i> (L.F) khadir	Bark (sticks) – astringent used in dentifrice, sour throat
6	Ardra*	Krishnaguru <i>Aquilaria agallocha</i> Roxb.	Wood – cooling agent
7	Punarvasu	Bamboo, velu <i>Bambusa arundinacea</i> (Retz.)Wild	Calcium silicate crystals at the nodal region in female plant at maturity - anti-bilious and anti-phlegmatic, anti-cough and anti-asthma
8	Pushya	Peepal, sacred tree <i>Ficus religiosa</i> (L.)	All parts – useful as astringent
9	Ashlesha	Undal <i>Calophyllum inophyllum</i> (L.)	Stamens – used as a cooling agent and in bleeding piles
10	Magha	Banyan <i>Ficus benghalensis</i> (L.)	Columnar roots- for promoting strong hairs
11	Poorva phalguni	Palash <i>Butea monosperma</i> (Lam.) Taub.	Seeds - anti-helminthic and root sap – cleansing eyes
12	Uttara phalguni	Payari <i>Ficus tsiola</i> Roxb.	Stem bark – for cleansing ulcers
13	Hasta	Ritha <i>Sapindus laurifolius</i> Vahl.	Seed endosperm - sedative
14	Chitra	Bael <i>Aegle marmelos</i> (L.) Corr.	Pulp of the raw fruit – anti-dysenteric
15	Swati	Arjuna <i>Terminalia cuneata</i> (L.) Skeel	Powdered bark – All sorts of cardiac disorders and joining of fractured bones
16	Vishakha	Nagkhesar <i>Mesua ferrea</i> (L.)	Stamens – used as a cooling agent and in bleeding piles
17	Anuradha	Sita ashok <i>Saraca asoca</i> (Roxb.) Wilde	Gynecological disorders, cough and pitta
18	Jyestha	Shalmali <i>Bombax ceiba</i> (L.)	Flowers – anemia and seedling tubers - tonic
19	Mool/mula*	Sal tree <i>Shorea robusta</i> Roxb.ex Gaertn.	Exudate from stem – a gum resin used for washing and cleansing wounds
20	Poorvaashada*	Raattan cane <i>Calamus rotang</i> (L.)	Anti-cough
21	Uttarashada	Jackfruit <i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i> (Lam.)	Floral parts and seeds - edible fruit
22	Shravan	Rui <i>Calotropis gigantea</i> Aiton	Flowers - anti-asthma
23	Dhanishhta	Shami <i>Prosopis spicigera</i> (L.)	Bark – used in the treatment of skin troubles
24	Shatataraka	Kadamb <i>Neolamarckia cadamba</i> (Roxb.) Bosser	Bark - anti-inflammatory and rheumatism
25	Poorvabhadrapada	Mango <i>Mangifera indica</i> (L.)	Fruit - tonic, bark and leaves – useful as astringent
26	Uttarabhadrapada	Neem <i>Azadirachta indica</i> A.Juss.	All parts are of medicinal value, juice of flower and leaves – anti- HIV and contraceptive
27	Rewati	Mahua <i>Madhuca longifolia</i> var <i>longifolia</i> (Roxb.) cher.	Flowers and seeds – preparation of asawa and arishta, Anti-pyretic and anti-inflammatory

Alternative member when the specific member is not available locally

Sr.No	NAKSHATRA	PLANT SPECIES	MEDICINAL AND OTHER PROPERTIES
1	Ashwini	Adulsa <i>Justicia adhatoda</i> (L.)	Seeds- alkaloid strychnine works on nervous, respiratory and circulatory system nux vomica of H
2	Ardra	Sandalwood <i>Santalum album</i> (L.)	Wood and Bark – cooling and used against urinary infections
3	Mool/mula	Devbabhul <i>Acacia farnesia</i> (L.)	Bark and flower - Anti-malaria, diarrhea and skin ailments
4	Poorvaashada	Sita ashok <i>Saraca asoca</i> (Roxb.) Wilde	Gynecological disorders, cough and pitta



Nakshatra Garden Layout



Conclusion: One such Nakshatra garden has been establish In our laboratory campus on 5th June, 2014 on the occasion of World Environment Day. In NCL, scientists of natural product group are actively working for search and identification of novel molecules of medicinal plants. So, development of this type of garden is indeed a first step to identify the traditional resources useful against different human ailments.