



IMPORTANCE OF PLANTS IN TULUNADU (KARNATAKA) RITUALS AND CEREMONIALS

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Abstract– In Dakshina Kannada, Udipi, part of Kodagu (Karnataka) and Kasaragodu districts (Kerala), where majority of people speaks ‘Tulu’ as their mother tongue. Some time this geographical area is also represented as ‘Tulunadu’ which has a unique cultural and traditional taboos. In ‘Tulunadu’ people celebrate various festivals, Ceremonials and rituals throughout the year in various occasions. At present, Tulu communities expanded to various parts of the World. However, the belief, rituals and ceremonies are unique among Tulu communities, though many of the rituals like Bhoota–Aaradhane (Devil worship) and Naaga-Aaradhane (Serpent worship) are now having Vedic influence. The rituals, ceremonies and festivals which represent cultural heritage of this region. An attempt has been made to document the plants which are used in various occasions like festivals and rituals in Tulunadu which can be one of important document for the future generations for their reference as well as to conserve the important plants and it can be used for various purposes mainly medicines. The information about the use of different plants in rituals, ceremonies and festivals were gathered from village folks from different parts of Puttur, Moodbidri, Belthangadi Taluk and parts of Kasaragodu and categorized into plants used in rituals, festivals and ceremonies. More than 40 plants are used in different occasions in Tulunadu and most of them are medicinally useful. The Tulu communities celebrate special occasions like Aati amavasye, Bhoota aaraddhane of Bhoothada Kola, Naaga aaradhane or Nagathambila, Keddasa, Vishu, Pathanaje, Baliyendra Purba, Koralu habba or thene habba, Seemantha, Brahmodheshha, Shasti oota, Sona Shanivara and Hosa akki oota (Pudhvar) during which

plants are used for various purposes. Similarly, for the special beliefs, people conserve the florist elements in Tulunadu.

Keywords– *Bhotharadhane, Serpent naga, seemantha, Brahmodhesh*

INTRODUCTION:

There are several Tulu speaking communities distributed in major district Dakshina Kannada, Udipi and parts of Kodagu in Karnataka and Kasargod in Kerala state. There is a myth that this land is created by Lord Parashurama. Tulunadu separated from Arabian sea till Western Ghats and on north till Uttarakannada and in south till Payaswani river. The ‘Tulu’ language is the mother tongue language which spoken by more than 3 million people. Tulu is a Dravidian language of India. Most of its speaker is native on the districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udipi, parts of Kodagu and Kasargodu. The major crops grown in this region are rice, ragi (in very olden days) bengal gram, horse gram, most of the vegetables and fruits. The plantation crop like coconut, arecanut, cocoa, cashew nut, cocoa, rubber and pepper also grown. The belief, rituals and ceremonies are unique among Tulu communities, though many of the rituals like Bhoota–Aaradhane (Devil worship) and Naaga-Aaradhane (Serpent worship) have Vedic influence. The rituals, ceremonies and festivals represent cultural heritage of the region. The objective of the study is to document plants used in festivals, rituals and ceremonies of Tulunadu.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The information about the use of different plants in rituals ceremonies and festivals were gathered from village folks from different parts of Puttur, Bantwal, Moodbidri, Sullia, Madikeri, Belthangadi and Places of Kasaragod Taluk. Based on the information gathered references were made to the available literature and classified into i) Plants used in rituals ii).plants used in festivals and iii) plants used in ceremonies. Emphasis was given only to those plants which are used in Tulu communities.

Results and discussion: The vernacular Tulu and Kannada names and botanical names of plants used in rituals and ceremonies are given in table 1.

Plants used in rituals are

1) **Keddasa:** This is worshiping of mother nature in the Tulu month Poge coinciding to the month of February. Keddasa is celebrating for 4 days. The female head of the family offers prayer in the early morning by prostrating to the mother goddess by keeping jackfruit leaf, mango leaf, saroli leaf, that are decorated by turmeric, kumcum, betel leaf, arecanut, on the earth surface then coconut oil is spill on it (Fig. 1). By this people thanks the mother earth for giving food, shelter for them. Plants used in this ritual are leaves of Jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*), Mango (*Mangifera indica* L.), Saroli (*Aporosa lindleyana* Blume), Betle leaf (*Piper betle* L.), Kumkum(*Mallotus philippensis* Lam.), Termeric powder (*Curcuma longa* L.) seed of Arecanut (*Areca catechu* L.), Coconut oil (*Cocos nucifera* L.). The “Nanneri” is a traditional food prepared during this ritual by using red rice (*Oryza sativa* L.) Kajejaya a type of rice and menthe (*Menthe sp.*) where both ingredients were fried and powdered. At last the jaggary is added to this mixture. On this occasion, special dishes were prepared only by using important vegetables like brinjal (*Solanum melongena* L.), drum stick (*Moringa oleifera*

Lam.), Colocasia (*Colocasia esculenta* L.), Harive soppu (*Amaranthus tricolor*) and majority of sprouted grains. Similarly, rice (*Oryza sativa* L.) roti usually prepared on this occasion.

2) **Makhe :** This is celebrated during the month of march. It is the worshiping of rivers by offering beetle leaf (*Piper betle* L.), arecanut (*Areca catechu* L.), coconut (*Cocos nucifera* L.) and most of the pulses (Dhal, Mungu bean, Cow pea, Horse gram, green gram and menthe.). This is called 'Bagina'. Plants used in this rituals are betel leaf (*Piper betle*), Arecanut (*Areca catechu* L.), Coconut (*Cocos nucifera* L.) and banana (*Musa paradisiaca* L.) leaves (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Cereals, pulses and beetle leaves



Fig. 2 Bhagina (cereals & Pulses) to worship rivers

3) **Bootharadane:** In Tulunadu, people worship the special deities like Shiradi bhutha, Kallurty, Panjurli, Guliga, Aati guliga, mahishanthaya, koragajja, devil worship is called Bhoota aaradhane which are unique rituals of Tulunadu. ‘Bhootha’ in Tulunadu represent Historic persons like a great leader or ruler or brave men and women, people who keep faith and worship them are believed to be blessed with protection

and prosperity. Bhootha worship is in the form of 'Nemothsava'. The person who gets possessed by the Bhootha is called 'Bhootha patri'. The 'Bhootha patri' uses a golden coloured dye for application to the face obtained from the bark of 'Aardaala' tree. The coconut which is widely cultivated as commercial crop is practically used especially in Bhootha-aaradhane (Fig. 3). The Coconut tree is considered as symbol of prosperity and it is often offered in the form of tender coconut to Bhootha deities, the dry leaves of coconut are tied to form

burning torch in 'Bhootha kola and 'Nemothsava', the tender coconut leaves are knitted and designed for decorating the Bhootha demigods. Apart from Coconut, another commercial crop of Tulunaadu is Arecanut, the tender inflorescence of Arecanut is used as symbol of fertility and prosperity both in Bhootha-aaradhane and Naaga- aaradhane. The sheathing leaf base of Arecanut is locally called 'Paale' is used in preparing the masks of different Bhootha deities which is worn by the Bhootha Pathri during Nemothsava.



Fig. 3. Bhoothadharadhane and Sacred groves

Table 1. List of Plants used in various occasions in Tulunadu, Karnataka

number	Tulu name	Kannada name	Botanical name	Common English name
1.	Aardhala	Hardala	<i>Garcinia morella</i>	Ardhala
2.	Aari	Akki	<i>Oryza sativa</i>	Rice
3.	Bacchire	Vilyadele	<i>Piper betle</i>	Betel
4.	Badane	Badane	<i>Solanum melongina</i>	Brinjal
5.	Baje	Baje	<i>Acorus calamus</i>	Baje
6.	Bajjeji	Adike	<i>Areca catechu</i>	Arecanut
7.	Bare	Bale	<i>Musa paradisiaca</i>	Banana
8.	Bedru	Bidiru	<i>Bamboosa arundinecea</i>	Bamboo
9.	Chekkai	Thega	<i>Tecona grandis</i>	Teak
10.	Chevu	Kesu	<i>Colocasia esculenta</i>	Colocasia
11.	Daddala	Kavalu mara	<i>Careya arborea</i>	careya
12.	Devadaru	Bage	<i>Albizia lebbeck</i>	Rain tree
13.	Ittevu	Taggi gida	<i>Clerodendrum viscosum</i>	Clerodendron
14.	Kadike	Garike	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	Cynodon
15.	Kalli	Kalli	<i>Euphorbia nerifolia</i>	Cactus
16.	Kukku	Mavu	<i>Mangifera indica</i>	Mango

17.	Manjal	Arasina	<i>Curcuma domestica</i>	Turmeric
18.	Nurge	Nugge kai	<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	Drum stick
19.	Paale	Haale mara	<i>Alstonia scholaris</i>	Devil's tree
20.	Padpe	Harive	<i>Amaranthus viridis</i>	Amaranthus
21.	Pelakai	Halasu	<i>Artocarpus heterophylla</i>	Jack
22.	Pongare	Pongare	<i>Erythrina variegata</i>	Indian coral tree
23.	Saroli	Saroli	<i>Aporosa lindleyana</i>	Aporosa
24.	Seege	Seege kai	<i>Acacia concinna</i>	Soap nut
25.	Tarayi	Tengu	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>	Coconut
26.	Tulasi	Tulasi	<i>Ocimum sanctum</i>	Sacred basil
27.	Bilva	Bilva	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Leaves
28.	Aekka	Aekka	<i>Calotropis gigantia</i>	Flower

Plants used in festivals are:

1) **Sauramana Ugadi** : This is also called 'Bishu'. It is celebrated during month of April. This being the first day in the Hindu calendar. People wake up before sunrise take a oil head bath. Neem (*Azadiracta indica*) leaves are put in the bath water before taking a bath. Main door of house is adorned with mango (*Mangifera indica*), and neem leaves (*Azadirachta indica*), known as "Thorana". Then keeping coconut, arecanut, rice, mirror, and some vegetables in front of god and then the bitter neem flowers are mixed with jaggery and it is distributed to everyone in family (Bhat, 2014). This is practiced to remaindus that both happiness and sadness have to be experienced in one's life. Some sweet is also prepared like greengram and cucumber payasum for sake of celebrate the happiness (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4 Articles for Sauramanaugadhi

2) **Aati amavasye** : It is celebrated in month of July. It is an annual ritual of drinking the

concoction made out of bark of *Alstonia scholaris* is in practice. It store all medicinal properties. Inner fleshy part of the bark will be peeled out and grind the pepper cumin and garlic to prepare a milky bitter concoction. Heating white pebbles on charcoal and addition to the concoction believed to eliminate the toxic constituents, then taken by all members of the family in empty stomach. This ritual is believed to provide protection against various diseases in the rainy season. In literature the medicinal property of the tree is described as follows. A large ever green tree with greenish white flowers and long narrow pendulous follicles in clusters. The bark is intense bitter taste, which has been used in treating malaria and other fever and also used as bitter tonic, astringent, laxative, anti-helminthic, anti-leprotic in treating leucoderma, dental caries, stomach ache, used in the liquid extract form for chronic diarrhoea, asthma and cardiac troubles; the milky latex from the plant is applied externally to treat sores, ulcers, tumors and rheumatic pains and also administered to women after confinement; leaves used in beriberi, drodsy and fever, leaf and bark used in treating ulcers. In ayurveda the bark is used for treating fever, malarial fever, leprosy, worm infection, wounds, cough, pain, dyspnea and diseases of blood.

Another common delicacy preferred to consume during this season is the tender bamdoo shoots (*Bambusa arundinaceae*) (kanile). Shoots of the plant is reported to possess anti - inflammatory, antiulcer, antidiabetic, anti-oxident etc. It is also

ritual that keeping of kalli or stem of kayar to the paddy field it is belief that it keep all microorganisms and it protect the paddy (Shetty, 2002).



Fig. 5. Removing of Bark of devil tree and worshipping

- 3) **Makara sankranthi** : This rituals is celebrated in the month of January. This is also called "suggi". It is the harvest festival for farmers of tulunadu. During this there is a ritual that plant would normally contain ellu mixed with fried groundnuts, dry coconut, and jaggery. This mixture is called "Ellu -bella".
- 4) **Shivrathri** : This festival is celebrated during the tulu month of "mayi". Main plant used in this festival is bilva (*Aegle marmelos*), it is believed that it is favorite plant of lord Shiva. Others plants used in this festival are flower of ekka (*Calotropis gigantia*), (*Calotropis procera*), leaves of Canabis sativa, gouri flowers (*Thevetia peruiana*), Datura (*Datura metel*), Fruit of Zizipus mauritiana, Rudraksha (*Elaeocarpus ganitrus*), Shrigandha (*Santalum album*).
- 5) **Ganesh chathurthi**: This festival is celebrated in month of September. The main plant used is stem of sugarcane (*Sacarrum officinarum*). By using this Panchakajjaya is prepared it contain ellu, sugarcane, etc. There are other 22 plants are used in this festival they are flower of hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa sinensis*), garike (*Bridelia retusa*), *Artemisia vulgaris*, *Solanum xanthocarpum*, *Aegle marmelos*, *Bridelia retusa*, *Datura metel*, *Ziziphus jujuba*, *Achyranthus aspera*, *Ocimum sanctum*, *Mangifera indica*, *Nerium oleander*, *Evolvulus alsinoides*, *Punica granatum*, *Cedras deodara*, *Majorana hortensis*, *Vitex negundo*, *Jasminum grandiflorum*, *Solanum nigram*, *Prosopis spicigera*, *Ficus religiosa*, *Terminalia arjuna*, *Calotropis gigantia*.



6) **Baliyendra Purbo:** This is a celebration of Deepavali festival. The Asura King Bali is believed to visit the people of his Kingdom (Tulunadu) and bless the people for prosperity. The celebration comes in the month of October-November, the celebration is on the next day of new moon called Paadya. In this

festival a wooden pole is erected in the front yard of the house made either from Haale (*Alstonia scholaris* L.) or Hongare (*Erythrina variegata* L.) tree, during the celebration the pole is decorated with different types of wild flowers and lighted with oil lamps.



7) **Pudwar:** In Tulunadu Rice is the staple food. Three crops of Rice are raised in a year. 'Yenelu' crop from June to September, 'Suggi' crop from October to January and 'Kolake' crop from February to May. The rice grains of Yenelu crop is not used until Pudwar is celebrated in month of September or October. In this festival all the family members gather on an auspicious day, the occasion is also celebrated as 'House filling' or it is also called "Koralu habba". In this ceremony the Rice culms laden with grains are bundled with leaves of Mango (*Mangifera indica*) Jack (*Artocarpous heterophyllus*), Tulasi

(*Ocimum sanctum*), Bamboo and rolled inside Ittevu leaf and held together by a rope made from the bark of Daddala tree (*Careya arborea*), all these materials are worshipped either within the house or in the temple and tied to pillars of the house and agricultural implements. Many families celebrate Pudwar on Vijaya Dashami which is the last day of Dasara festival. Pudwar is celebrated with cooked white rice of new crop in the liquid form called 'Ganji' mixed with Coconut milk and jaggery, use of Harive and colocasia curry is a must in this celebration.



Plants used in ceremony:

1) **Simantonnayana / Baby shower:** It is held by when the woman is in her 5-6th month of pregnancy. In tulu language it is called "Bayake". In this pregnant woman is

garlanded by bundle of jasmine along with the sealed pingara (fertile tender areca flower), odd number of betel leaves and arecanuts and Kumcum (vermilion). During this time, the juice of the *bridalia retusa*

(garike) around 2-3 drops poured in to her nose to reduce her hungry so that the baby will grow healthy.

- 2) **Naming ceremony (Namakarana):** This naming ceremony is celebrated during 2nd or 3rd week after the birth. In this ceremony a paste made from the rhizome of *Acorus calamus*, commonly called "Baje", *Centella asiatica*, Liquorice also called jestamadu, pinari, and jaikai is applied to the tongue of the newborn baby. It is a traditional medicine the application of the paste to the tongue improves the pronunciation and talking ability in children. It also act as antiseptic and antibacterial.



- 3) **Brahmopadesha:** At the age of 8 this ceremony is celebrated. In this ceremony the palasha stick is held by a boy as the symbol of protection. During this occasion boy (vatu) used to sit on one type of furniture which is called "Mudi" made up of paddy seeds covered by husk which is tied in straws of thin bamboo stem. Mudi is dipped with cowdung water and dried. By sitting on this mudi will increase the concentration of vatu.
- 4) **Marriage ceremony:** In this ceremony before the marriage there is a ritual of fixing the marriage date by the elders of both the bride and bridegroom party is called 'Nischithartha' (Engagement), during this time Arecanut fruit placed over a Betel leaf is exchanged between the parties. This practice is also found in practically all occasions of

celebrations, rituals and festivals as a gesture of trust, good will and assurance. The festoons made from mango leaves are used at the entrance to the premises and often the Banana plants are also placed on either side of entrance as symbol of prosperity.

- 5) **Funeral ceremony:** After death of the person the dead body is lightened by family members usually by using dried mango stems for burn dead body easily.

CONCLUSION

In 'Tulunadu' places where people speak tulu as mother tongue, celebrate various festivals, Ceremonials and rituals throughout the year in various occasions. They basically agricultural people and believe in special deity mainly daiva and serpent naga. Presently, Tulu communities expanded to various parts of the World but, the belief, rituals and ceremonies are unique among Tulu communities. Majority of them celebrate rituals like Bhoota-Aaradhane (Devil worship) and Naaga-Aaradhane (Serpent worship). The rituals, ceremonies and festivals which represent cultural heritage of this region have got long history. Due to this, natural sources have been conserved for sustainable management mainly biodiversity in these regions.

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