



Book Review on Puspayurvedah - A unique contribution of Prof. P.V. Sharma

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"Puspayurvedah" authored by Prof. P.V. Sharma, is a scholarly collection of the use of flowers in the Ayurvedic system of medicine. Despite being a specialized subject, traditional Indian medicine heavily relies on the therapeutic qualities, historical importance, and medicinal qualities of diverse flowers. The author painstakingly catalogs a vast variety of flowers using the botanical features and medicinal properties found in traditional Ayurvedic texts. The book offers academicians and clinicians, a thorough knowledge of traditional uses of flowers. "Puspayurvedah" is not only a useful academic resource but also a useful guide for anyone who wants to use floral remedies in Ayurvedic therapy because of its practical formulations and applications. The book is notable for its comprehensiveness and depth of knowledge.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Medicinal plants, Flower, Puspayurveda (Flowers in Health and Diseases)

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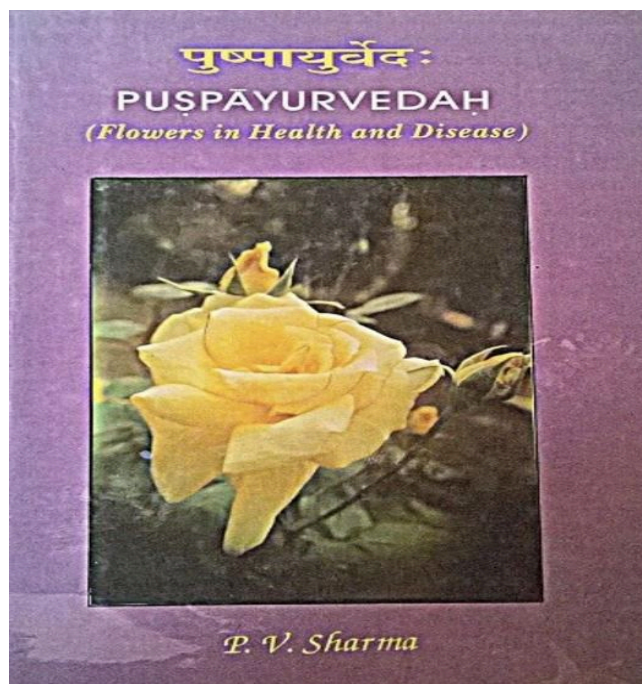


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Introduction

Knowledge about the utilization of medicinal plants proves to be advantageous solely in cases where they are clinically applied. It is asserted in the *Charaka Samhita* that a true connoisseur of medicinal plants is one who, in addition to being able to identify them by their names and morphology, possesses profound knowledge of their therapeutic uses in the context of both the prevention of diseases and their management. Various scholars have underscored the significance of utilizing different parts of a plant for the promotion of health and treatment of diseases. Flowers hold a distinctive position within the realm of *Ayurveda* and have been employed for therapeutic purposes since time immemorial. References emphasizing the importance of flowers can be found in numerous ancient texts, such as the inclusion of flowers in *Audbhida Gana* and *Shad Virechana Ashraya* in *Charaka Samhita*. [1] *Vrikshayurveda* (the science of plant life) gives an overview of the propagation techniques of flowers but not their therapeutic applications. The author has endeavored to compile the information regarding flowers available in various *Samhitas* (Ayurveda classical textbook in Sanskrit language) and *Nighantus* (lexicon).



- **Book** - Puspayurvedah (Flowers in Health and Diseases)
- **Author** - Prof. Priyavrat Sharma

- **Publisher** - Chaukhamba Visvabharati, Oriental Publishers and Distributors, Varanasi
Edition - 2006

- **Number of Pages** - 1

Author's Profile [2]

The author, Prof. PV Sharma (1920-2007), was born into a family with a long lineage of traditional practitioners of Ayurveda in the village of Mustafapur, Bihar. His extensive body of work includes over 500 articles and 50 publications, through which he mentored numerous Ayurveda scholars, leading to his well-deserved moniker of "Walking Encyclopedia" of Ayurveda.

He actively participated in various central scientific committees under the Government of India, such as the Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia Committee, the Scientific Advisory Board at Gujarat Ayurveda University in Jamnagar, and the Hindi Advisory Board at the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. He played a key role in the development of the "Dravyaguna Vigyana" Post Graduate specialty within the Ayurvedic educational system.

He was bestowed with honorary fellowships from esteemed organizations such as the French Society of Ethno-pharmacology, the Society of Ethnobotanists in India, and the National Academy of Ayurveda in India. He was honoured with many awards including an award from the Rama Narayana Vaidya Ayurveda Research Trust.

Book highlights: [3-5]

From the preface written by the author, we know that the book was first published in September 1997. The authors used the 2006 edition for the review. In introductory remarks, the editor Pt. V.P. Shastri of the Kalyankaraka by Ugradityacharya (1940) informs that there was a text entitled Puspayurveda which contained the use of flowers of eighteen thousand species a manuscript of which is available in Kannada script.

Prof. PV Sharma's *Puspayurvedah* was originally transcribed in *Devanagari* script and in '*Anushtup Chhanda*' (each *Shloka* having four quarters) and subsequently translated into English by the author, who also provided the *Latin* nomenclature of the plants in the relevant chapter. There is an elaborate index and list of abbreviations in Hindi and English at the beginning of the book.

This book is structured into five chapters and the chapters are called 'Pushpa' (flowers). It encompasses the characteristics and therapeutic actions of 80 flowers as described in Nighantus and similar literature. The utilization of flowers in the daily regime for preserving health is given. A comprehensive overview of the therapeutic uses of flowers across 45 medical conditions is presented in the book. Flowers are predominantly beneficial in cases of pitta aggravation, intrinsic haemorrhage, ocular ailments, and poisoning incidents. The concluding chapter delineates the diverse pharmaceutical formulations employing flowers.

Book insides

The first chapter (*Elucidation of Flower*), deliberates on the etymology of the term 'Pushpa' and its synonyms, the various phases and components of a flower, and the variations in its structure and hue. It further elucidates the blooming periods and harvesting schedules of different flowers like *Kinshuka* (*Butea monosperma* Taub.) and *Ashoka* (*Saraca asoca* Roxb de Wilde). Additionally, the chapter incorporates discussions on the toxicity, symptoms of toxicity, and their remedies. In this chapter, emphasis was given to five specific poisonous flowers like *Vetra* (*Calamus travancoricus* Bedd. ex Becc.) and *Kadamba* (*Neolamarckia cadamba* Roxb.).

In the second chapter (*Attributes and Functions of Flowers*), the author has cataloged flowers referenced in the 50 *Mahakashaya* of *Charaka Samhita* and the 37 *Gana* of *Sushruta Samhita*. Among the *Mahakashaya*, *Mutravirajaniya* (urinary depigmenter), *Purishsangrahaniya* (fecal astringent), *Purishvirajaniya* (fecal depigmenter), and *Daha Prashamana* (pacifying burning sensation) *Mahakashaya* groups include flowers. Whereas in *Sushruta Samhita*, the names of flowers appear mainly in the *Utpaladi*, *Priyangvadi*, *Eladi*, and *Pittasanmshamana* (pacifying pitta) categories. In this chapter, the therapeutic properties of 80 flowers along with their *Rasapanchaka*[6] (five attributes of *dravya* beginning with taste) are also enumerated. The third chapter (*Uses of Flowers in Health*), delves into the various ways in which flowers can be utilized for enhancing well-being. It highlights the diverse range of uses of flowers apart from their medicinal properties, such as adorning interiors, beautifying dining spaces, infusing fragrance into water, and dyeing fabrics.

Additionally, the chapter emphasizes the importance of flowers as one of the eight auspicious items to admire during the early hours of the day and before meals. It also discusses the cosmetic applications of flowers, like ointments/oils and perfumes. Furthermore, the chapter explains how flowers are incorporated into daily practices like *Nasya* (errhine therapy), *Dhoomapana* (therapeutic smoking), and *Shiro-Abhyanga* (therapeutic oil massage to head). It also briefly explores the tradition of adorning oneself with flowers based on seasonal variations.

In the fourth chapter (*Therapeutic uses of flowers*), the author thoroughly explores the therapeutic uses of flowers in treating 45 different health conditions. He elaborates on the use of flowers in various formulations for conditions such as fever, diarrhoea, haemorrhoids, urinary disorders, heart diseases, and skin diseases. For instance, he suggests the use of *Madhuka* (*Madhuca indica*), *Utpala* (*Nymphaea alba* Linn.), and *Vasa* (*Adhatoda vasica*) flowers in treating fever, and *Dhataki* (*Woodfordia fruticosa*), *Madhuka* (*Madhuca indica*), and *Utpala* (*Nymphaea alba* Linn.) for diarrhea. Additionally, he discusses the use of flowers in formulations for conditions like haemorrhoids, liver and spleen disorders, vomiting, mental disorders, dental issues, and eye diseases. Moreover, he also highlights the use of flowers in formulations for conditions related to women's health, pediatric care, poisoning, rejuvenation therapy, aphrodisiac therapy, and cleansing therapy.

The numerous medicinal forms of flowers are the subject of the fifth chapter (*Pharmaceutical forms of flowers*). The author describes seventeen distinct pharmaceutical forms of flowers, such as liquid extracts, powders, decoctions, fermented preparations, medicated oils, and confections. He also discusses the use of flowers in dietary preparations, such as soups, vegetable meals, drinks, and herbal teas.

Conclusion

The author's thorough research highlights the significance of 80 flowers in daily and seasonal routines in addition to exploring their therapeutic benefits. He offers useful applications, like cooling beds in the summer with banana leaves, *Kamala*, and *Utpala* flowers. This groundbreaking study sheds new light on the practical significance of medicinal plants, specifically focusing on the beauty and beneficial properties of flowers.

Prof. Sharma's work is poised to benefit flower enthusiasts, medical practitioners and researchers seeking to leverage their potential in various health conditions. The book can be user-friendly by adding a glossary of medical technical terms and an index. The eighty species listed in this book come from forty-four families, including six each from the Fabaceae and Oleaceae families. Out of the 80 species of plants mentioned in this book, fourteen plants like *Saraca asoca* (Roxb.) De Wilde (*Ashoka*), *Gentiana kurroo* Royle (*Trayamana*), *Mesua ferrea* Linn. (*Nagkesar*) have been enlisted under the "Flagship programme - Threatened Plants Conservation" by CSIR National Botanical Research Institute.[7]

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