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Vrikshayurveda - A Boon

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ABSTRACT

Ancient India has given us a treasure of *Vrikshayurveda* which if utilised wisely can be a boon to our society. Looking at the pathetic malpractices of modern agriculture and haphazard use of chemical pesticides and fertilisers it is the need of time today to bring it back as part of good agriculture practises. *Vrikshayurveda* is a dedicated text written by Surpala signifying the importance of agriculture science. *Vrikshayurveda* means the science of Plant Life. Indian agriculture and horticulture stands at the crossroads today. Chemical fertilizers and pesticide are petroleum derivatives. But with the depletion of oil reserves all over this planet within next 20-25 years this system of agriculture cannot last. At that time we need to find out alternate cultivation methods and nothing can be better than *Vrikshayurveda*. Already there is a boom of organic farming nowadays. But organic farming and *Vrikshayurveda* are totally different aspects of agriculture. Simple experiments can always be done by easily available materials' mentioned in *Vrikshayurveda*. Surpala also comes up with a number of impractical suggestions, fanciful ideas that do not please us at times therefore further study and research should go along simultaneously.

Key words: *Vrikshayurveda, Surpala, Agriculture, Chemical fertilisers, Pesticides.*

INTRODUCTION

Vrikshayurveda is a dedicated text signifying the importance of agriculture science. *Vrikshayurveda* mainly deals with various species of trees and their healthy growth and productivity.

Ancient India not only had medical science for humans but also one for plants called as *Vrikshayurveda*.

The main aim of Ayurveda is "Swasthasya Swasth Rakshanam, Aturasya Vikar Prashamanamcha" means to maintain the health of healthy human

beings and treat the diseased ones.

The same principle is applied to plants in *Vrikshayurveda*.

The science which deals with plants, their nourishment, productivity & growth is called as *Vrikshayurveda*.

Existence of *Vrikshayurveda*

Now a days we prefer to go on foreign tours in our vacations but in ancient time people used to sought after forests. The forests provide them the right atmosphere be it to hunt, think, write or meditate. They were also very close to nature. As man's association with forest deepened his concern for the health of the forest also grew. His curious nature and minute observation lead one fact to another. Thus the concept of *Vrikshayurveda* came into existence.

Historical background

The earliest references are in :

Rigveda, Atharveda, Amarkosha, Varahmihir's Brhat Samhita, Krishi Sukthi, Manasollasa, Agnipurana, Upanvinod.

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Dhanvantari Nighantu, Raja Nighantu, Bhavprakash Nighantu, Charak and Sushruta also describe some aspects of *Vrikshayurveda*. In above texts we only get scattered references.

There are few ancient texts which are completely dedicated to *Vrikshayurveda*

Vrikshayurveda written by Surapala (1000 AD). It's the only available independent ancient Sanskrit text on plant life.

Mr. Y.L. Nene (Chairman Asian Agri-History Foundation) procured a manuscript of *Vrikshayurveda* of Surpala from the Bodleian Library, Oxford, UK.

Dr. Nalini Sadhale did the English translation of the manuscript. It was only after this that Surpal's work became known to world.

The text *Krishi parashar* is repertoire of all agricultural techniques written around 6th century AD.

Krishi Sukthi by Kashyap - 800AD

Upavanvinod by Sharangdhara

Vishvallabha by Chakrapani Mishra - 1577AD

Surpala explains importance of trees in his very first chapter and by taking advantage of common man's religious attitude, superstitions and beliefs urged them to plant more and more trees.

Why.... *Vrikshayurveda*

- Establishment of novel modified methods for the agricultural systems.
- To build eco-friendly environment.
- Healthy growth and productivity of plants.
- Improvement in the rate of production without altering the medicinal properties of plants.
- Health hazards caused by rampant use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides can be cut down.
- It has mentioned every possible measure to maintain ecological balance to maintain nature's harmony.

Major subjects brought under *Vrikshayurveda* include;

- Procuring, preserving, treating seeds before planting.
- Preparing pits for planting saplings.
- Selection of soil.
- Method of watering.
- Nourishments and fertilizers.
- Plant diseases and plant protection from internal and external diseases, remedies.
- Layout of a garden.
- Ground water resources.

Few Examples mentioned in *Vrikshayurveda*

- Seeds sprinkled with milk, smeared with mustard and ash of sesame and brihati rubbed with cowdung sprout in no time.
- Seeds sprinkled with milk, rubbed with cowdung, dried and profusely smeared with honey and vidanga definitely sprout.
- Trees grown from such seeds bear forever abundant flowers and fruits of an excellent quality.
- Trees which are smoked heavily by a mixture of ghee, Vidanga, milk water and honey become full of flowers and fruits in a short time.
- For the growth of a young sapling a cold mixture of fish, flesh and sesame should be given every 7 days.
- The mango trees are nourished well and are loaded with sweeter and bigger fruits if treated with water mixed with ripe fruit of ankota, ghee, honey and marrow of a boar.
- Mango is specially benefitted by cold fish washings.
- The coconut trees become loaded with weight of huge fruits and also become free from diseases if smeared at night with extracts of fermented

liquor, sesame, black gram and wine mixed with honey, salt and vidang.

- Coconut trees always produce fruits as big as pots if they are treated with soup of black gram, saltwater, powder of barley in abundant quantity.
- When saturated with fish water and earthworms treated with milk the pomegranate tree produces sweet and big fruits.
- Watered with plenty of triphala decoction and immediately with husk the jack fruit tree bears many fruits which are very sweet and without seed.
- When badar, lakuch, dhatri, jambu trees are amply watered and sprinkled with urine everyday, they bear fruits of big size with nector like taste.
- The bilva and kapitha trees when sprinkled with mixture of jaggery, ghee, milk and honey bear plenty of juicy fruits.
- A tree which normally produce tasteless fruits starts producing sweet fruits if thickly smeared at the root with the paste of mixture made out of *Vidang*, *Yashtimadhu*, *Yava*, milk and jaggery.
- To remove insects both from roots and branches of the trees one should water the trees with cold water 7 days.
- The insects on the leaves can be destroyed by sprinkling the powder of ashes and brick dust.

Surpala also comes up with a number of impractical suggestions, fanciful ideas that do not please us at times therefore further study and research should go along simultaneously. Few examples of such experiments are quoted below under the category Wonder Experiments or Miracle trees.

Wonder Experiments or Miracle trees

- Champaka (*Michelia champaca*) produces nagkesara (*Mesua ferrea*) flowers if sprinkled with the mixture of milk, fat of wart-hog, kunati (coriander) and durva (*cynodon dactylon*).
- Kadali (*Musa paradisiaca*; banana) plant produces excellent pomegranate fruits when watered with

decoction of kankola (piper cubeba) and blood and fat of hog.

- Seeds of Vartaka (*Solanum melongena*) be smeared with honey and ghee should inserted carefully inside a fresh kushmanda (*Benincasa hispida*) fruit and extracted after a fortnight. When it is sown it produces a creeper with leaves of kushmanda but the fruits it bears are those of Vartaka. It is indeed a wonder.
- Tamarindus indica turns into a creeper with very sweet fruits when sprinkled with water mixed with the powder of yava (barley), masha (*Vignamungo*), tila (sesame) and vrihi (*oryza sativa*) and then thoroughly smoked with nisha (Turmeric).
- No doubt there was demand for such wonder varieties of trees for laying out special gardens and horticulturists must have developed skills and techniques to produce these by pursuing the matter not only as a hobby but also as serious research projects. King Someshwer of today's South India was very famous for developing such wonder gardens (Manasollahas-Budrakrida)

DISCUSSION

For last many decades Indian agriculture has mainly concentrated on increasing yield and to achieve this goal all sorts of fertilizers and pesticides has been used. Their negative impact on nutritional and medicinal quality of plants as well as the environment (fertility of soil has gone down, water bodies have been polluted) is becoming evident with time. Ancient India valued the importance of conservation, cultivation, collection methods, bio resources and their use for health promotion thousands of years ago.

The scientific community should validate the sayings of *Vrikshayurveda* and the development of the agriculture as well as the production of various medicinal plants used in various system of medicine.

Now is the high time for us to bring back the treasure of *Vrikshayurveda* into application, as there is rampant use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides to

boost the growth of plants which is mainly the quantity and not the quality. As a result many diseases like cancer, hormonal imbalance have found way in our society. The highest rate of cancer in India is in Haryana, Punjab due to the haphazard use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides so if we incorporate the methods told by *Vrikshayurveda* in agriculture we can definitely cut down the incidence of such deadly diseases.

CONCLUSION

The field of *Vrikshayurveda* has a huge scope for research in Ayurveda. One can try different methods of cultivation, use of pesticides and fertilisers given in *Vrikshayurveda* and evaluate its authenticity in today's agriculture practises. We can wisely amalgamate *Vrikshayurveda* and modern biotechnology for the benefit of society.

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