

Plants of Religious Belief and their Ethno - Botanical Importance in Ratnagiri District

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Abstract: *The present research paper describes the plants of religious belief and ethno - botanical importance of Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra and their associated deity and festivals. Several intensive surveys were carried out to find the definite role and importance of 40 religious belief-oriented plant species in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra, India in life styles, religious activities and healthcare. These religious significant plants are used in variety of ceremonies in various ways throughout the year by the people of study area. Furthermore, these plants are considered as sacred due to their medicinal, aesthetic and natural qualities. Thus, our ancestors linked various God and Goddess with several plants for their conservation and named as sacred plants. These ancient beliefs show the human relation with plants are also helpful in the conservation of plant species for their valuable qualities.*

Keywords: Religious belief, ethno - botany, Ratnagiri District

1. Introduction

The ancient belief shows that, there is significant relationship between human beings and plants. Plants have been traditionally considered sacred due to its close association with deity. For example Bel tree (*Aegle marmelos* L.) is associated with Lord Shiva. Sacred plants are considered to be incarnations or symbols of God or deities and therefore their worships became more common. They play very important role in the myths and customs of India. Without the use of sacred plants and their products, the religious and cultural rituals are not completed (Pandey and Pandey 2016). Folklore, culture, food and medicinal practices are deeply linked and influenced by plants (Badoni and Badoni 2001). On the basis of ancient scriptures, a wide variety of plants like *Ficus religiosa* L., *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss., *Ocimum tenuiflorum* L. etc. has divine qualities, therefore used in the number of religious activities, marriages and other ceremonies (Robinsons and Cush 1997). The trend of sacred plant worshiping was also present during the Vedic period (Bhatla et. al., 1984). Furthermore, all people celebrate religious festival with a scientific background and use one or several plant parts in their ceremonies (Bajpai et. al. 2016). The various parts of plants have been used as source of medicine by man from ancient to modern era (Truyen et. al. 2015). In this paper some of the plant species which have divine qualities for human health and medicinal practices but held sacred in the Ratnagiri District of Maharashtra are discussed.

2. Study Area

The Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra was selected as the present study site. Ratnagiri coming under Konkan region of Maharashtra and having a coastal line in the western coast of Maharashtra. It has north - south length of about 180km and average east - west extensions of about 64km. This district comes between 10.30 to 18.04 north latitudes and 73.02 to 73.53 east longitudes. Ratnagiri can be physically divided into three zones. Coastal zone extend to about 10 - 15km

from sea coast and generally has low altitudes and about 2500 mm rainfall. Most of the activities in this area are connected with sea. Hill area includes the western slopes of Sahyadri and extends up to about 10 - 15km. It generally has medium to high altitude with high rainfall about 3500 mm. A large area in this zone is covered by forest although it is deteriorating very fast. This area contains hill forts, Ghats, roads, wild life etc. Middle zone area lies between the coastal and hill areas and generally has medium altitude. It is more accessible due to the Bombay - Goa highway as well as the Konkan railway. The administrative headquarters of district is located in the town of Ratnagiri. The district is bounded by Arabian Sea to the west, Sindhudurg district to the south, Raigad district to the north and Satara, Sangli and Kolhapur district to the east. This district is a part of Konkan division. The district is divided into 9 Tehsils such as Mandangad, Dapoli, Khed, Chiplun, Sangameshwar, Guhagar, Ratnagiri, Lanja and Rajapur. Ratnagiri district has major rivers like Washishti, Jagbudi, Savitri, Bawnadi, Muchkundi, Jaitapur, Shastri etc. They swell in the Sahyadri mountains and flow to the west and get access to Arabian Sea. Since the river basins are shallow, their flow is very speed in the monsoon season. Therefore, these rivers have limited use. There are upper rows of Sahyadri on the eastern boundary of the district. The height of these mountain peaks is generally 400 to 2000 meters.

3. Materials and Methods

The present study is based on intensive field survey among different cultures, festivals, ceremonies and functions throughout the district during 2023 - 2024. The plants were observed by visiting different festivals, ceremonies and captured images by digital photography. The present information regarding sacred plants was collected through consulting the people, villagers, traditional medicine practitioners and peoples involved in different traditional functions to know the local names, sacred value and medicinal importance of mentioned plants.

List of sacred plants used in different traditional functions of Ratnagiri District

Name of plant species, Family and Vernacular name.	Associated Tradition/ Legacy	Plant parts used/Religious belief of the plant species.	Medicinal importance/ Food value
<i>Senecio bombayensis</i> Balakr. Asteraceae Sontal	1. Naag Panchami 2. Ganesh Festival	The plant produces yellow colored beautiful mass flowering in the holy month Shravan (August to September) and it is easily available during the Indian tradition Naag Panchami hence it will used to offer Naag raja and also used to decorate seating arrangement of idol God Ganeshha called 'Mandapi' in every home of Ratnagiri during Ganapati festival.	The root and seeds are antispasmodic, expectorant and stimulant. They are used in the treatment of asthma, laryngeal and bronchial diseases. The leaves are styptic and vermifuse. They have been chewed as a treatment for sore throat. The warmed juice of leaves is squeezed over boils to cure them. Used as ear drops, eye drops to cure conjunctivitis and applied to skin to treat wounds. An extract of plants has bactericidal properties.
<i>Impatiens balsamia</i> Linn. Balsaminaceae Tirada	1. Naag Panchami 2. Ganesh Festival	The flower of this plant is easily available in the holy month of shravan hence it will utilize to offer Naag raja during Naag Panchami and also during Ganesh festival to offer God Ganeshha and Goddess Gauri and flower are also used as decorative articles over seating arrangement of God Ganeshha and Goddess Gauri.	The plant has been long prescribed for the treatment of rheumatism, isthmus, generalized pain, fractures, inflammations of nails, scurvy, carbuncles, dysentery, bruises, foot diseases etc.
<i>Gloriossa superba</i> L. Colchicaceae Kal - lavi/ Hatoba	1. Naag Panchami 2. Goddess Gauri	The flower of this plant is easily available in the month of shravan which is most attractive glorious and structure is like to that of hood of cobra hence, it will utilize to offer for Naag raja and also used over the cloth of Goddess Gauri to increases its beautifulness.	Leaf decoction applied as cough and general pain. Leaf juice is instilled into the nose in cause of fainting. Leaves are administered in enema as a decongestant. Crushed leaves are applied to the chest to treat asthma. At low doses, the tuber has numerous medicinal applications. It is used traditionally for the treatment of bruises, colic, chronic ulcers, hemorrhoids and cancer. The tuber is claimed to have antidotal properties to snake bite.
<i>Solena amplexicaulis</i> Lam. Cucurbitaceae Gometi	Naag Panchami	The entire climber along with flower is used to provide shelter over Naag raja during Naag Panchami in every parts of Ratnagiri District.	The raw fruit of this plant is eaten as food by rural people of Ratnagiri. The tuberous root of plant is used to treat anorexia, digestive problems, flatulence, asthma, gonorrhoea, spermatorhea. The extracts of leaves are widely used to treat inflammation.
<i>Panicum milliicum</i> L. Poaceae Vari	1. Naag Panchami 2. Navanna pournima.	1. The popcorn prepared from dried grains of this plant is used to offer for Naag raja along with milk in every parts of Ratnagiri District. 2. This is cultivated cereal crop, commonly grown in all parts of Ratnagiri district. The newly harvested grains are used to make rice recipies for god oblation and spikelets are used to make Torana (festoon) during Navanna pournima in Dasara festival.	The millet is rich in dietary fiber, low glycemic load and have micronutrients like Mg, Fe, and vit - B. The famous soup called 'Ambil' is prepared from fermented flour of grains in Ratnagiri District which is rich in vit - C. It's having high antioxidant levels, improved cholesterol profiles of the consumer and as a source of safe food for persons with celiac disease.
<i>Chlorophytum tuberosum</i> (Roxb.) Baker Asparagaceae Kaki bhaji/ Safed musali	Naveeni	The plant growing during early monsoon in every parts of Ratnagiri hence used to make vegetable for dainty of god during Naveeni in Gram devi temple at the beginning of monsoon and make prayer to god "May wealth and prosperity flow in whole year.	The leaves and tubers eaten as vegetables. The roots are used as natural sex tonic. The roots are used to remedy for diabetes, arthritis and increasing body immunity, increasing lactation in feeding women.
<i>Celosia argentia</i> Linn. Amaranthaceae Kurdu	1. Naveeni 2. Dasara	1. The plant growing during early monsoon in every parts of Ratnagiri and easily available hence used to make vegetable for dainty of god during the programme of Naveeni in Gram devi temple at the beginning of monsoon and make prayer to god "May wealth and prosperity flow in whole year. 2. The flower is easily available in the holy month of Ashwin and it will fresh longer period of time hence used to make Torana (festoon) during Navanna pournima in Dasara festival.	Young shoots and leaves are used as pot herb and very suitable vegetable. Seeds are considered as medicinal against diarrhea and in urinary tract infections and kidney stones.
<i>Dioscorea pentaphylla</i> L. Dioscoreaceae Telpad	Sarvapitri Amavasya/ Mahalaya Shradha	The plant coming in flowering during the month of August to September and thus flower is easily available hence flower buds are used to make vegetable and offer to our ancestors.	Flower and tubers used as vegetables. Rural people of Ratnagiri district use tuber to treat skin infections. They applied tuber paste externally on lesions to treat the infections. The fresh tubers are also crushed with water and paste is applied externally on lesions.
<i>Colocasia</i>	Sarvapitri	The plant is easily available during the season of	Tubers are important sources of carbohydrates

<i>esculenta</i> (L.) Schott. Araceae Alu	Amavasya/ Mahalaya Shraddha	“Pitruapaksha pandharawada” hence leaves are used to make vegetable to offer for our ancestors.	are used as staple food in certain communities like kunabi during monsoon. The corm juice is utilized as remedy for liver enlargement and piles. Its natural dietary fibers content helps to maintain the blood cholesterol level and gut health. It slows down the absorption of glucose into the blood stream and thus helps to control blood sugar level also. The leaves are good in anemia due to its iron content.
<i>Mangifera indica</i> L. Anacardiaceae Amba	1. Ganapati festival 2. Navanna pournima 3. Marriage ceremonies. 4. Holi ceremony	1. Mostly twig of mango plant along with 5 - 8 leaves are used as holy practice in Ratnagiri District. The twig only of wild variety is used. The twig is tight over the seating arrangement of idol God Ganesha and Goddess Gauri during Ganesh festival. 2. The twig of plant is also used to decorate pendol in marriage ceremonies. 3. The leaflets along with petiole is removed from twig and used to make Torana (festoon) meaning Gateway in Sanskrit, is a grassland like decorative, made out of mango leaves and marigold flower along with different spikelet’s of grains. It is used to adorn the doors of homes in all homes of Ratnagiri.	Juice of bark is remedy for piles. Dried leaves are burn to take smoke in throat infection. Seeds cotyledons are used to kill Round worm and also in piles.
<i>Helicteres isora</i> Linn. Malvaceae Murudsheng	Ganapati festival	The Bark obtained from twig is utilized to tight mango twig and different flowers over the seating arrangement of God Ganesha.	Root is used against convulsions and diabetes. Dried fruit is rubbed with water and used to cure ear infections and poultice is used over the swelling area. The dried fruit is rubbed in water and used to remove air and stomach troubles in child.
<i>Cocos nucifera</i> L. Arecaceae Naral	1. Ganapati festival 2. Every ceremony, festival and tradition 3. Dev Diwali	One of the important fruit of “Mandapi” (Wooden article placed over God Ganesha in Ratnagiri District). The fruit is harvested from coconut plant in such a way that, without drop on the earth is used for this purpose. The fruit is also utilized in every ceremonies, functions and traditions of Hindu ceremonies in Ratnagiri district. The fruit is broken by making prayer to God and begins the programme.	Decoction of young root is used to gurgling mouth in throat infection and also helps to make molar teeth strong. Flower rubbed in water and used against Gonorrhoea. Oil prepared from endocarp is used for skin diseases. Juice of young coconut is used on urinary disorders. The fermented soup called “Maadi” prepared from young inflorescence is used as liquor.
<i>Areca catechu</i> L. Arecaceae Supari	1. Ganapati festival 2. Dev Diwali 3. Marriage ceremonies.	The bunch of fruits of this plant is principally used to tight on Mandapi. The broken seeds are used to keep on betel leaf along with coconut slice and distributed to the people in the ceremony of Dev Diwali in Ratnagiri.	Mostly the peoples of Konkan region use Areca nut for chewing in betel leaf. The nut is also used to kill parasites and promote digestion.
<i>Cucumis sativus</i> L. Cucurbitaceae Kakadi	Ganapati and Gauri festival.	Cucumber is one of the fruit vegetable grown during monsoon season hence it will utilize to tight on Mandapi. Rather than this, some people also use different types of fruits according to their interest and availability. During Ganesh immersion, cucumber is cut into pieces and distributed to peoples as dainty. The cucumber pieces also used in “Vaan” of Goddess Gauri.	Cucumber juice helps to maintain the water level in the body and also helps in better urine flow in order to release toxins out of the body due to its diuretic property. It also helps to balance pitta dosha in the body and also gives a cooling effect due to its sita (cold) property
<i>Celastrus paniculatus</i> Willd. Celastraceae Kanguni	Ganapati and Gauri festival	It is climber grown in monsoon season and shows flowering at the end of August. The plant produces yellowish - orange fruits. The bunch of fruit is used to tight over Mandapi to create decorative pleasure in Rajapur Tehsil.	Seeds of this plant are used to alleviate cognitive issues and promote intestinal health. The seeds can also be made into oil, which is sometimes used in massage. The oil is used to relieve skin inflammation and has a mild sedative effect.
<i>Mussaenda glabrata</i> (Hook. f.) Hutch. Rubiaceae Sarvad	Gauri festival	The white colored sepals are used over the cloths of Goddess Gauri to increases its beautifulness.	Leaves are used to treat asthma, cough, fever, headache, jaundice, eye infections and an emollient. Roots are used to treat cough, jaundice.
<i>Terminalia elliptica</i> Willd. Combretaceae Aayn	Ganapati festival	During monsoon season, plant produces five rigged fruit. The bunch of this fruit is utilized to decorate Mandapi.	The bark is astringent. It is used in the treatment of diarrhea. The juice of bark is applied externally to cuts and wounds. It can also be boiled, then rubbed into the head to remove dandruff. A paste of gum is applied externally to burns and is also used to treat swelling caused by inflammation. The bark yield tannins which are used to dye fishing

			nets in Konkan region. The wood is an excellent fuel wood and provide an excellent charcoal.
<i>Lagerstroemia purviflora</i> Roxb. Lythraceae Naram / Bondara	Ganapati festival	The fruit of this plant is used to decorate Mandapi	The timber is used for general carpentry and is widely employed locally for house beams and rafters, doors and windows frames, carts, boat and agricultural implements. Some very high class cabinet work has been executed with this wood.
<i>Tabernaemontana alternifolia</i> L. Apocynaceae Nagkuda	Ganapati festival	The yellowish - orange colored fruits are utilized as decorative articles in Mandapi.	The roots, leaves and flowers are all used to treat snake and scorpion poisoning.
<i>Trichosanthes tricuspidata</i> Lour. Cucurbitaceae Kawandal	Ganapati festival	It is annual climbing plant growing in the monsoon season; producing orange colored fruit which will be utilize to decorate Mandapi.	Fruit is used in asthma, carminatives, leprosy and rheumatism.
<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> (L.) Pers. Poaceae Durva	Ganapati festival	It is three bladed plants known to attract immense energy of Ganapati. According to mythology, one while fighting a demon, Ganesha ended up swallowing him. This gave him a strong burning sensation in his stomach. When all else failed to provide relief, a group of sedges offered 21 blades of the Durva grass over the head of God Ganesha hence we also offer to the same now days.	It is utilize in the traditional treatment as anti - emetic, intestinal parasites, indigestion, profuse menstruation, colds and bruises.
<i>Utricularia reticulata</i> Sm. Lentibulariaceae Sitechi Asav	Ganapati and Gauri festival.	The plant grown as terrestrial or sub - aquatic plants in marshy grasslands or wet soil over rocks and producing mass flowering during the month of Bhadrapada. The flower of this plant is easily available in this month hence used to offer for God Ganesha and Goddess Gauri.	The plant is insectivorous. Trap small insects which were insect pest on other cultivated crops. The plant also helpful to conserve water and prevent soil erosion.
<i>Hibiscus rosa - sinensis</i> L. Malvaceae Jaswandi	Ganapati festival and every puja path in Hindu culture.	The flower Hibiscus is divine creation made in such a way that it can absorb pranic energy into its centre. Ganesha is form of Mangal whose color is naturally red. Mangal is equal to the angry form of Lord Ganesha. Mangal favorite flower is Hibiscus which is generally red so we offer flowers like Hibiscus to God Ganesha.	Dried flower is used on leprosy. Extortion of leaves is applied on cyst. Bark + Flower used in reproductive diseases such as irritation. Juice of flower + Coconut oil is used as hair tonic.
<i>Tagetes erecta</i> Linn. Asteraceae Zendu	Dasara and Navanna pournima	The flower of plant is easily available in the month Ashwin and if it is removed from plant, it will long lasting as it is hence used to make Torana (festoon) during Navanna pournima and also as garlands in Dasara festival.	Petals are used for yellow dye. The lutein obtained from flower is used in the prevention of age related eye diseases such as cataract and muscular degeneration. The leaves are used for prevention of coronary artery diseases, heart attacks, immune response. The plant also has the history of used against intestinal parasites and worms.
<i>Eleusine coracana</i> (L.) Gaertn. Poaceae Nachani	Navanna pournima (Dasara)	This is cultivated cereal crops commonly grown on hilly areas of Ratnagiri District. The newly harvested grains are used to make recipies for oblation to God and Spikelet's are used to make Torana (festoon) during Navanna pournima.	The grain is ground into the flour and used to make plate - bread (Bhakari). The nachani plate - bread is best food for diabetic patients. The flour is also fermented to make soup called Ambil in Ratnagiri District. It is useful to release pitta dosha. Millet is rich in iron and calcium content hence it is used for preparing baby's food. In Ratnagiri District, Ragi is traditionally fed to women after child birth.
<i>Oryza sativa</i> Linn. Poaceae Rice/ Tandul	1. Navanna pournima. 2. Dev Diwali 3. Mriage ceremonies	This is cultivated cereal crop, commonly grown in all parts of Ratnagiri District. The newly harvested grains are used to make rice recipies for god oblation and spikelet are used to make Festoon during Navanna Pournima. The grains are also used to throw over the newly married couples during marriage ceremonies.	Rice is an excellent source of essential nutrients and vitamins such as carbohydrates, proteins, iron, dietary fibers, potassium, zinc, magnesium, thiamin (B ₁), riboflavin (B ₂), niacin (B ₃), pantothenic acid (B ₅) and vit - B ₆ . The rice is ground into flour and used to make plate - bread. The rice is also coarsely ground into flour and used to make semi solid soup called "Pej" which is best food for young ones and patients.
<i>Panicum milliicum</i> L. Poaceae Vari	Navanna pournima	This is cultivated cereal crop, commonly grown in all parts of Ratnagiri District. The newly harvested spikelet are used to make Torana (festoon) during Navanna pournima in Ratnagiri District.	The dried grains are used to make soup called "Ambil" in Ratnagiri District. It is delicious and rich in vit - C. It's having high antioxidant levels, improved cholesterol profiles of the consumer and as a source of safe food for

			persons with celiac disease.
<i>Hibiscus tiliaceus</i> L. Malvaceae Raan bhendi	Navanna pournima	The bark of stem is very much flexible and tensile hence used to tigh festoon material during Navanna pournima.	Mature leaves used to treat fevers and coughs. Leaf sap used as laxative or a lubricant for childbirth. Flowers used to treat ear infections and abscesses. Bark mucilage prescribed for dysentery.
<i>Caryota urens</i> L. Arecaceae Surmad/Bherli mad	Holi	The stem of plant is branchless and straight attain up to 10 - 15 m. height hence used to celebrate Holi Festival in all parts of Ratnagiri.	The juice is extracted from the inflorescence is used to prepared toddy. The juice is also boiled into sugary syrup. The fruits are chewing with betel leaf in some parts of Ratnagiri for alternative of areca nut.
<i>Bombax ceiba</i> L. Malvaceae Kate savar	Holi	The stem of plant is thorny and branchless, straight and does not having importance in carpentry or other uses; hence entire plant is used to celebrate Holi in various parts of Ratnagiri.	The gum of stem is astringent, demulcent and tonic. It is used in the treatment of dysentery, hemoptysis, in pulmonary tuberculosis, influenza and menorrhagia. The leaves are hypotensive and hypoglycemic. The bark is reputedly used against cholera, pleurisy and diuretics. It is used in bandages for lasting fractures or given in infusion for toothache.
<i>Areca catechu</i> Linn. Arecaceae Supari	Holi	The stem of branch is branchless, straight and easily available in Ratnagiri; hence rural people of Ratnagiri used entire plant to celebrate Holi ceremony.	Fruit powder used in urinary tract infections. Leaf juice plus oil used to make poultice on cramps. Seed rubbed into water and applied in vagina to cure white discharge. Fruit is also used as anthelmintic.
<i>Butea monosperma</i> (Lam.) Taub. Papilionaceae Palas	Yagya and Havan/ Agnihotra/ Yag/ Hom	The younger stem sticks of stem are used to pour in Yagya called "Samidha". Yagya is the process of worshiping God through fire. It is believed that it brings positivity to our life. It is important ritual in Hinduism that is performed in every auspicious work. It is believed to have many benefits including purification, spiritual connection, auspiciousness, symbolism, community and tradition. In this activity sticks of different plants are offer in fire to create positivity. In the scriptures, the fire of moon is said to be of Palas and by burning its stem sticks accomplish all tasks.	Leaf boiled and tigh over blisters. Leaf juice is effective against piles. Bark decoction is used on cold, cough etc. Flowers used to release swelling.
<i>Acacia catechu</i> (L. f.) Willd. Mimosaceae Khair	Yagya/ Havan/ Agnihotra/ Yag/ Hom	The younger stem sticks of plant are used to pour in Yagya. In the scripture, the fire of Mars is of Khair and its firewood destroys sins. Khair is considered one of the sacred trees by the natives and wood is used in the religious ceremonies at the time of havans. Wood is considered sacred and used as one of the religious plants along with bhojpatra (<i>Betula utilis</i>) at funeral ceremony. It is believed to provide mukti or moksha (Peace to heavenly soul)	Heartwood of Khair is boiled to prepare decoction which is used to make Katha used in chewing betel leaf and also used in coloring matter as a binding agent. Traditionally the plant used as antifungal, antiviral, spasmolytic and hypoglycemic properties.
<i>Ficus religiosa</i> L. Moraceae Peepal	Yagya/ Havan/ Agnihotra/ Yag/ Hom	The younger stem sticks of plants are used to pour in Yagya. In the scripture, the fire of Jupiter is of Peepal which provides progeny.	Traditionally, the bark is used as antibacterial, antiprotozoal, antiviral, astringent, antidiarrheal, in the treatment of gonorrhea, ulcers and leaves used for skin diseases. The leaves reported anti venom activity and also regulate menstrual cycle. Fruits are used as laxative, latex is used as tonic.
<i>Achyranthes aspera</i> Linn. Amaranthaceae Aghada	Yagya/ Havan/ Agnihotra/ Yag/ Hom	The younger stem sticks and root of plant is used to fire in Yagya. In the scriptures, the fire of mercury is of Aghada.	The root of plant is useful in treating pneumonia, cough, kidney stones and urinary track infections. The root decoction is also used in the treatment of scorpion bite.
<i>Ficus racemosa</i> Linn. Moraceae Umbar	Yagya/ Havan/ Agnihotra/ Yag/ Hom	The younger stem sticks of plants are used to pour in Yagya. In the scriptures, the fire of Venus on earth is is of Umbar and its firewood gives heaven.	Bark is dried to make powder and utilized in diabetes, liver disorders, diarrhea, inflammatory conditions, and hemorrhoids, respiratory and urinary diseases.
<i>Prosopis cineraria</i> (L.) Druce Fabaceae Shami	Yagya/ Havan/ Agnihotra/ Yag/ Hom	The stem stick of plants is used to pour in Yagya. In the scriptures, the fire of Saturn on the earth is of shami and its firewood destroys sins.	Leaves of this tree can use in mouth ulcers. The poultice of leaves is applied on swellings.
<i>Cynadon dactylon</i> (L.) Pers. Poaceae Durva	Yagya/ Havan/ Agnihotra/ Yag/ Hom	The leafy shoot of this grass plant is use to pour in Yagya. The fire of this leaves gives long life. The fire of Rahu occurred on earth is of Durva.	It is used as folk remedy for anasarca, calculus, carbuncle, convulsion, cough, cystitis, diarrhea, leukoderma, headache. The paste made from the plant mixed with honey is used

			in epistaxis. A leaf decoction is mixed with sugar useful in the problem of urinary retention.
<i>Desmostachya bipinnata</i> Linn. Poaceae Darbha	Yagya/ Havan/ Agnihotra/ Yag/ Hom	The plant is used to pour in Yagya. In the scriptures, The fire of ketu is of kusha (Darbha) which fulfils all wishes. Rings made from Darbha grass, known as Darbha pavitram are worn by priests and individuals during prayer rituals. These rings are believed to shield the wearer from negative spiritual energies and enhance the effectiveness of their prayers. During Hindu rituals, dry Darbha grass is dipped into the water. This purifies the water and makes it for religious customs.	The decoction of plant used as burning sensation as in gastritis, neuropathy, burning sensation in eyes, Dysuria, urinary retention, kidney and bladder stones, excessive thirst etc.

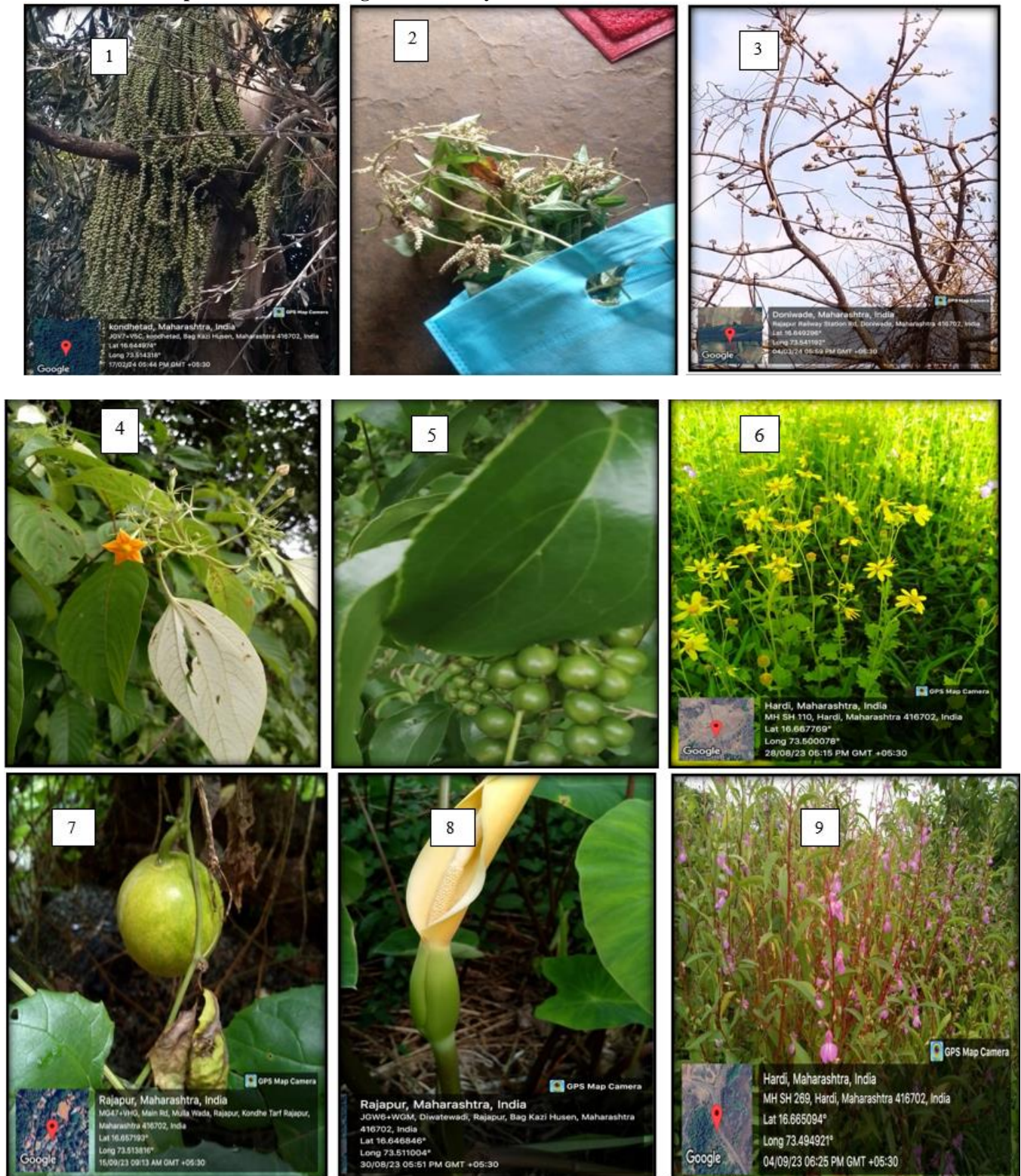


Plate 1: Some important religious practices in Ratnagiri



1. Hom/ Havan/ Yagya. 2. Procedure for cutting mango tree to make Holi. 3. Distribution of Vaan of Goddess Gauri. 4. Preparation of Holi for Holika dahan.

Plate 2: List of some plants utilized in religious ceremony.



1. *Caryota urens* 2. *Dioscorea pentaphylla* 3. *Bombax ceiba* 4. *Mussaenda glabrata* 5. *Celastrus paniculatus* 6. *Senecio bombayensis* 7. *Trichosanthes tricuspidata* 8. *Colocasia esculenta* 9. *Impatiens balsamia*

4. Result and Discussion

From the above research, it is found that, the rural people of Ratnagiri district use 40 medicinal plants in their rituals, ceremonies and festivals. Plants have always been a central part of the life of rural cultures of Ratnagiri. The people of Ratnagiri developed different procedures to protect the knowledge of important medicinal plants which are

interlinked directly with their life activities. Late, they would be developed into different cultural activities like as religion, ceremony, ritual and festivals on the basis of their importance. The knowledge is gathered by the people on trial and error method and use to cure different diseases and illness from which they suffered. Present study investigate 40 plant species are necessary to complete their rituals, festivals, ceremony and religions, but some of them have not

knowledge about religious practices and medicinal value of these plant species in their daily life. The answer of people is that, these plants are necessary for them because their ancestors use them but why they use these plants is unknown for them. This situation reflects that the knowledge of medicinal value of these plants has nearly vanished but it still adheres to their religious cultures; so it is the time to protect the local name of these plant species.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that, 5 plant used in Naag Panchami ceremony, 17 plant used in Ganesh festival, 5 plant used in Gauri ceremony, 2 plant used in Naveeni, 4 plant used in Dasara festival, 2 plant used in Sarvapitri Amavasya, 2 plant used in Dev Diwali, 6 plants used in Navanna pournima, 4 plants used in Holi ceremony, 6 plant used in Yagya/Havan in every parts of Ratnagiri district. This study also shows ethno medicinal applications. 3 plants used as bronchial diseases, 3 plant species used in boils, burns wounds. 3 plant species used in eye disorders, 3 in skin diseases. One plant used as antibacterial, 3 plants utilized in rheumatism, one in dysentery. 4 plants applied for cough and general pain. 9 plant used in digestive problems, one plant species in cancer treatment, 3 has antidote properties. 4 plant species applied against inflammation, one plant as sex tonic, one plant for increasing lactation in feeding woman, one plant for diarrhea. 6 plant species utilized for urinary disorders. 4 plant species used to cure piles, 2 for diabetes, 2 species for throat infection and one for gonorrhoea.

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