

# Various Plant use in Socio-religious and Cultural Ceremonies of Rural areas in Janjgir-champa, District in Chhattisgarh

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**Abstract:** Janjgir-Champa district of Chhattisgarh state is rich in plant diversity. Janjgir-Champa district is inhabited by a large number of Vaidh who possess a great traditional knowledge base in plant resources. Social botanical surveys were conducted in the Janjgir-Champa district of Chhattisgarh during Jan 2021 to Dec 2021 to investigate and documentation plants used in the various religious and cultural ceremonies. Altogether 36 spiritual and ceremonial plant species happiness to 21 families were recorded in the present study. Villagers of Janjgir-Champa use these plants in many ways including worshipping Gods and Goddesses for the protection and betterment of their life. They conjointly use these plants in their spiritual functions and cultural ceremonies for his or her roaring completion. These plants were found essential to commence all the religious, auspicious and cultural festivals. Almost all tribal communities regard some plants as sacred in origin and necessary for religious and cultural functions. Tribes used certain plant species for specific purposes and functions, according to the findings of the current inquiry.

**Index Terms:** Rural, Baloda, Janjgir-Champa district, Plants, socio-religious and cultural functions, Chhattisgarh

## I. Introduction

Plants play a major role within the life and culture of individual. Spiritual and ceremonial plants see a gaggle of sacred plant species that are utilized in numerous rituals by the folk of various religions and cultures. These plants are essential to start out any spiritual or cultural functions and one cannot imagine finishing completing any spiritual or cultural rituals while not them (Acharya, 2003) Jharkhand, the land of forest may be a north-eastern state of South Asia.

The natural resources for flora and animals in this district are abundant. It is inhabited by various tribal communities Agariya, Baiga, Uraon, Dhanwar, Bahelia, Takankar, in Baloda, Janjgir-Champa district. They depend upon the forest and its merchandis for his or her recourses. Tribes of the Baloda Janjgir-Champa district, like other forest-dwelling ethnic or tribal populations, believe that plants may heal them possess supernatural abilities (Kumar Sen and Bahera 2007), which are evident in their socio-religious and cultural practices cultural rituals.

The term religion refers to a collection of belief systems, cultural systems, social views and responsibilities that link humanities to spiritual, social, and moral values to some level. Religious and cultural beliefs are systems of good or evil faith and worship of supernatural entities, as well as the belief that everything in the cosmos is a supernatural being's deed (Hajra 2004, Dekota and Chhetri 2013). Each human society worship is performed with ancient rituals. There is no spiritual or cultural ritual that does not need plants and their merchandise. Tribal communities keep their traditions through folklore and worshipping their deities from the moment of birth to the moment of death (Sharma and Pegu 2011). They utilize numerous ous plants and their merchandise to take care of their beliefs. They consider only a few plants to be sacred and ritually significant. These plant spirits have a huge impact on people's lives. Although the communities' traditions are dwindling as younger generations migrate to towns and cities, they are losing faith in their traditional institutions. As a result, documenting and preserving the values of these beliefs and associated plants for future generations is critical, as little systematic information is currently available. This paper attempts to investigate and document spiritual and cultural values of plants prevailing amongst the tribes of Baloda, Janjgir-Champa district of Chhattisgarh.

## II. Study area:

The present study was undertaken in the selected tribal villages of Janjgir-Champa district of Chhattisgarh which lie approximately between 21.9706° North latitude and 82.4753° East longitude. The different villages visited during the present study were **Akaltara Block** - Amora (4,943), Arjuni (3,069), Bargawan (2,526), Changori (2,764), Hardi (3,821), Jhilmila (3,347), Kapan (3,834), Kotmi Sonar (7,662), Nariyara (9,942), Pondidalha (5,149), Tilai (4,836).

**Baloda** - Bachhoud (1,965), Baksara (1,727), Beltukri (1,337), Budgahan (3,835), Charpara (3,326), Deori (1,281), Dongri (2,708), Jarwe (2,788), Jawalpur (3,649), Junnadih (1,062), Koliha Deori (816), Pahariya (2,292). **Dabhra** – Baghaud (2,274), Bartunga (2,149), Dhurkot (2,378), Kirari (3,004), Kotmi (3,941), Sakrali (4,549), Sapos (2,801), Sukhada (2,909), Tundri (3,810). **Jaijpur Block** - Akalsara (2,689), Amgaon (3,143), Beladula (2,895), Bhothiya (3,405), Hasaud (5,194), Kachanda (3,062), Kashigarh (3,726), Kikirda (3,892), Odekeria (4,711), Thathari (5,307)

The pH of soil slightly acidic to neutral. Soil organic matter in medium range. Calcium and magnesium were sufficient; zinc was deficient, whereas copper, manganese and iron high in range of studied area. The temperature range in this area varied usually in between 10<sup>0</sup>c to 42<sup>0</sup>c. This district has a lot of ethnic and cultural diversity from a socio-cultural standpoint.

## II. Materials and methods

Several field trips were organized in tribal dominated villages of Janjgir-Champa district of Chhattisgarh during the years Jan 2021 to Dec 2021. Individual interviews in focus groups, field walk conversations, and involvement in religious and cultural activities ceremonies of important Villagers of Baloda Janjgir-Champa district were conducted with at each session, a tertiary-educated translator is present.

The field trips were organized in 42 populated villages of four blocks of Janjgir-Champa district namely Akaltara, Baloda, Dabhara and Jaijaipur. During field visits, the data and information reported in the paper were gathered through observation and dialogue with local people. The information was gathered from a variety of locations, including mountain areas, grounds, and other venues such as festival grounds. Plant samples that were unidentified were gathered and brought to the department for identification. The sacred and ceremonial plants were identified by their vernacular name, botanical name, and family. Standard methods were used to create herbarium specimens of several of the unidentified plants (Jain 1987).

Standard floras were used to identify the unknown herbarium specimens (Hooker, 1872-1897) and matching with the E-Herbarium of Chhattisgarh State Medicinal Plant Board at Raipur. The Table - 1 Lists the plant species that have been identified in alphabetical order.

## III. Observations

TABLE – 1  
Plants used in religious and cultural ceremonies by the Villagers of Janjgir-Champa district

S. N.	Botanical Name	English Name	Vernacular/ Local Name	Family	Plant Form	Parts in Use	Ritual Uses
1	<i>Acacia catechu</i> Willd.	Black catechu	Khair	Mimosaceae	T	Whole plant	Worshipped for family welfare
2	<i>Adina cordifolia</i> Hk.f.	Haldina	Kadam	Rubiaceae	T	Leaves	Worship
3	<i>Aegle marmelos</i> (L.)	Wood Apple	Bel	Rutaceae	T	Leaves	Worship
4	<i>Annona reticulata</i> L.	Wild sweetsop	Ramphal	Annonaceae	T	Leaves, Fruits	Religious ceremonies
5	<i>A. squamosa</i> L.	Custard apple	Sharifa	Annonaceae	T	Leaves, Fruits	Religious ceremonies
6	<i>Artocarpus lakoocha</i> Wall.	Monkey jack	Badhal	Moraceae	T	Leaves	Worship
7	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Mahogeny	Neem	Meliaceae	T	Twigs	Reception
8	<i>Butea monosperma</i> (Lam.) Taub.	Flame of the forest	Palash	Fabaceae	T	Twigs, Leaves	Sarhul festival
9	<i>Calotropis procera</i>	Madar	Aak	Asclepiadaceae	S	Flowers	Worship
10	<i>Carissa spinarum</i> L.	Bush plum	Jangli Karonda	Apocynaceae	S	Whole plant	Worshipped for family welfare
11	<i>Crossandra infundibuliformis</i> (L.)	Firecracker flower	Priydarsh	Acanthaceae	S	Flowers	Worshipping of Goddedd of Forest
12	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> (L.)	Bermuda grass	Doobi	Poaceae	H	Leaves	Worship
13	<i>Dalbergia lanceolaria</i> L.	Indian rosewood	Shisham	Fabaceae	T	Leaves, Stem	Worshipped for propitiation of planet
14	<i>Datura metel</i> L.	Devil's Trumpet	Dhatura	Solanaceae	S	Fruit, seeds	Worshipped of Goddess
15	<i>Dendrocalamus strictus</i> (Roxb.) Nees	Bamboo	Baans	Poaceae	H	Leaves, Clums	Making worship place
16	<i>Diospyros melanoxylon</i> Roxb.	Malabar ebony	Kendu	Ebenaceae	T	Wood	To avoid evil soul
17	<i>Embllica officinalis</i> Gaertn.	Indian gooseberry	Amla	Euphorbiaceae	T	Whole plant	Worshipped for family welfare

18	<i>Ficus benghalensis</i> L.	Banyan tree	Bargad	Moraceae	T	Whole plant	Worshipped for propitiation of planet Saturn
19	<i>Ficus hispida</i> L.f.	Hairy fig	Kathgoolar	Moraceae	T	Whole plant	Worshipped for propitiation of planet
20	<i>Ficus religiosa</i> L.	Acres fig	Pipal	Moraceae	T	Whole plant	Whole plant is worshipped
21	<i>Ficus religiosa</i> L.	Acres fig	Pipal	Moraceae	T	Whole plant	Whole plant is worshipped
22	<i>Madhuca longifolia</i> (J.Koenig) Macbr. Var.	Honey tree	Mahua	Sapotaceae	T	Flower	Religious ceremonies
23	<i>Mangifera indica</i> L.	Mango	Am	Anacardiaceae	T	Leaves & Twigs	Religious ceremonies
24	<i>Ocimum sanctum</i> L.	Holy basil	Tulsi	Lamiaceae	H	Whole plant	Worship as sacred plant
25	<i>Oryza coarctata</i> Griff.	Wild rice	Dhan	Poaceae	S	Grains	In religious ceremonies
26	<i>Polyalthia longifolia</i> Sonn.	Mast tree	Ashok	Annonaceae	T	Wood	For sacrificial fire
27	<i>Ricinus communis</i> L.	Castor	Arandi	Euphorbiaceae	S	Leaves, Fruits	In worship for family welfare
28	<i>Semecarpus anacardium</i> L.f.	Oriental cashew	Bhelatuki	Anacardiaceae	T	WP Seeds	Worshipped Kept for success in every work
29	<i>Shorea robusta</i> Gaertn.f.	Sal tree	Sal	Dipterocarpaceae	T	Twigs, leaves,	In religious ceremonies, Worshipped
30	<i>Solanum surattense</i> Burn.f.	Wild egg plant	Bhatkataiya	Solanaceae	H	Fruits	In religious ceremonies
31	<i>Sreblus asper</i> Lour.	Tooth-brush tree	Siora	Moraceae	T	Whole plant	Worshipped as abode of Goddess
32	<i>Terminalia alata</i> Roxb.	Silver grey wood	Saja	Combretaceae	T	Fruits	In religious ceremonies
33	<i>Thevetia peruviana</i> (Pers) merr.	Yellow Oleander	Pili Kaner	Apocynaceae	S	Flower	Worshipped of Goddess
34	<i>Viscum album</i> L.	Mistletoe	Hurchu	Santalaceae	S	Leaves	In initiation of rituals, Kept for success in every work
35	<i>Vitex negundo</i> L.	Chaste tree	Nirgundi	Verbenaceae	S	Leaves, Twigs	In marriage, worship
36	<i>Withania somnifera</i> L.	Winter cherry	Ashwagandha	Solanaceae	H	Roots	To prevent evil eye of others

#### IV. Results and discussion

In an ethnobotanical study of Janjgir-Champa district of Chhattisgarh, several plant species with religious, auspicious and cultural significances among various tribal communities were documented. Nature based festivals and cultural programs are interwoven with the day to day life of the people of this district especially Villagers. Altogether 36 plant species were recorded associated with the religious and cultural activities.

Their botanical name, vernacular name, family, life form, parts in use and ritual uses are depicted in Table - 1. The religio-cultural plants were represented by 33 genera under 21 families. The survey work indicated that trees occupied the dominant position (61%, 22 plant species), followed by 9 shrubs (25%) and 5 herbs (14%). The different plant parts used for religious and cultural ceremonies were roots, stems, culms, leaves, twigs, bark. Flowers, fruits, seeds and sometimes whole plant. These plant parts were being used for various purposes like worshipping Gods/Goddesses for family welfare, propitiation of planet, making worship place, religious ceremonies, reception to avoid evil soul, as sacred plant and for sacrificial fire to prevent evil eye of others. These religious plants are also used for the treatment of different ailments by the Villagers. Most of the religious and cultural plants were also found to be domesticated by the Villagers of Janjgir-Champa district for different rituals and purposes. Several findings of the study corroborate with the findings of religious and cultural utilization of different plants. Tying of neem leaves in the hands of bride and bridegroom during marriage was a tradition.

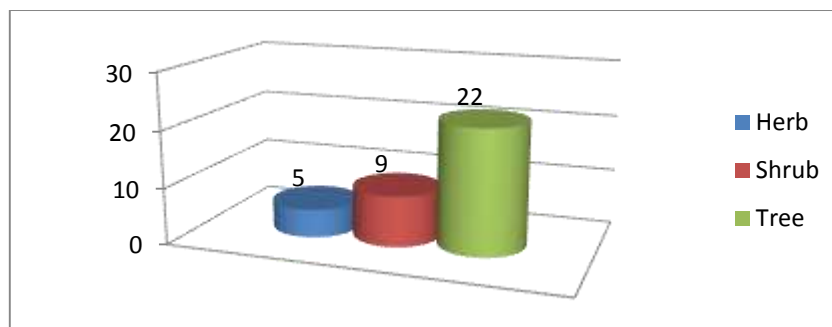


Fig- 1: plants form used for religious & cultural ceremonies.

## V. Conclusion

After going through the analyses of socio-religious, auspicious and cultural ceremonial plants used by the tribes of Janjgir-Champa district, it becomes evident that tribes use these plants mainly for their well beings by offering them to their God and Goddesses, to avoid evil's eyes to protect their children and houses and during their auspicious functions. All together 36 plants were found to be used by the tribes of Janjgir-Champa district. Most of these plants are considered sacred by the ethnic groups and also found to be domesticated and preserved by them. They also believe that some Gods and deities reside on trees in the forests (Sharma and Pegu 2011).

Hence, Villagers try to domesticate, and conserve these plants mainly for their rituals, to mark respect to their deities, to avoid curse by their deities and to some extent for medicinal purposes also. The domestication of religious and cultural plants by the villagers are good practices for conservation point of view. Therefore, the traditional knowledge of tribes on plants may be useful in finding new drugs for the welfare of human beings.

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