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FLORAL FORMULAE OF PUSHPA VARGA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BHAVPRAKASHA NIGHANTU

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Abstract

Bhavprakasha Nighantu is a systematic compilation of the material and verses related to Ayurvedic Medical Science from the ancient treatises to make them easy to read & understand Bhavprakasha Nighantu is written by Acharya Bhavmishra in 16th Century AD. Ayurvedic Science has mentioned medicinal properties of different parts of numerous plants . Flowers is one of such useful parts of the plants. Many therapeutic properties of flowers are mentioned in Bhavprakasha Nighantu under a specific category named *Pushpa Varga* .

Floral Formula is a means to represent the structure of a flower using numbers, letters and various symbols presenting substantial information about the flower in a compact form . This study attempts to correlate the advanced taxonomical tool of Floral Formula with the ancient knowledge about flowers of medicinal plants .

Keywords

Floral Formula , Pushpa Varga , Bhavprakasha Nighantu

Introduction

Nighantu is a Sanskrit term for a traditional collection of words grouped into thematic categories often with brief annotations . In Ayurveda , *Nighantus* are glossaries containing synonymous groups , the names of the drugs , plants , animals , minerals or anything that is administered either as food or medicine to the human body.

Bhavprakash Nighantu written between 15th to 17th Century AD by Acharya Bhavmishra is considered as an important Nighantu of Dravyaguna Vigyana (Science of Medicinal properties of plants) . This book is divided into three sections . Different medicinal plants (*Dravyas*) are classified into 24 *vargas* or groups . There is another group containing miscellaneous dravyas in which properties of Flowers of 39 medicinal plants are described. This group of flowers is collectively called as *Pushpa Varga* .

During Nighantu period , the modern science of Botany was not developed . People used to rely upon their senses like sight , smell , touch , taste to identify , remember & differentiate various medicinal plants and their useful parts . With the advent of Modern system of Botanical classification of plants and development of Plant Taxonomy ; it has become easy to apply this knowledge to ancient science of Ayurvedic medicine and medicinal plants in particular.

As majority of the classification of medicinal plants in Ayurveda is based on the therapeutic properties ; less emphasis is given on the morphology of different plants . So it is difficult to identify a particular plant species merely from the synonyms or medicinal properties . In such situations , application of modern Taxonomy is helpful for accurate identification of the plant.

A Floral formula consists of five symbols indicating from left to right :

- Floral Symmetry
- Number of Sepals
- Number of Petals
- Number of Stamens
- Number of Carpels

Table 1. Floral Formula symbols .

Br	Bracteate
K	Calyx
C	Corolla
P	Perianth
A	Androecium
G	Gynoecium
<u>G</u>	Superior ovary
\overline{G}	Inferior ovary
♂	Male
♀	Female
♂♀	Bisexual
\oplus	Actinomorphic
%	Zygomorphic
Enclosing figure within brackets	Fusion
Line drawn over symbols of floral parts	Adhesion
0 (zero)	Absence of a particular whorl
∞	Indefinite number of floral parts in a whorl

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