



Nakshatra Vanam

Shravan (Tiruvonam) Crown Flower



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Botanical Name: *Calotropis gigantea* (L.) W.T.Aiton

Tamil Name: Yerukku

Sanskrit Name: Sadapushpa or Arka

English Name: Milkweed or Crown Flower

Habitat

Shrubs stem rounded. Leaves 10-16 x 8-10 cm, smaller in branch-lets; elliptic-ovate to obovate, apex acute or obtuse, base cordate; lateral nerves 5-7 pairs, ad-pressed pubescent when young, becoming glabrous on maturity. Flowers pale purple or greenish-white, 3 cm across; pedicels to 3 cm long, stout; calyx lobes to 3 mm long; corolla campanulate, tube short, lobes ovate to oblong, recurved; staminal corona of 5 vertical lobes, 1 cm long. Fruit saccate, to 6 x 3 cm, ovoid; seeds many. (India Biodiversity Portal.com).

Religious Association

This constellation is associated with Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu represents the supreme being. Shravan means to hear. There are three stars associated with Shravan and it is also known as the three steps of Lord Vishnu. The deity of the constellation is Lord Vishnu. The goddess of learning, goddess Saraswathi, is also linked with this constellation. Saraswathi is worshipped on the Shukla Panchami day. On this day, the sun is in Shravan constellation and Moon is in Revati constellation (Rutesh R. Shah *et.al*, 2014). This shrub is closely associated with the temple of Kumarasamy (Shiva) located in Erukathampuliyur of Cuddalore district in Tamil Nadu (M. Amirthalingam, 2005). The milkweed shrub has also long been associated with the subject of astrology under the constellation **Shravan (Tiruvonam)**.



Medicinal uses and other benefits

The herbal medicines are used by the tribals mainly through the traditional healers with a strong spiritual belief. These magico-spiritual and religious beliefs may not have any scientific basis, but

they cannot be ignored. In the Indian folk songs, the plant is considered as the reincarnation of certain Gods or Goddesses and the leaves are offered to Lord 'Hanuman' and the flowers to 'Shiva', which may have a psychotherapeutic value. Thus *calotropis gigantea* used by the Kolas of Uttar Pradesh (leaves are put on the head of pregnant woman) for easy delivery and by North Bengal tribals (use a talisman with a root piece on the pelvic region of the woman at the time of copulation) for anti-fertility may not be explained by the clinical trials.

The treatment for colds, cough, asthma and bronchitis is as follows. The leaf is heated along with ghee and bandaged on the chest of infants. The leaf boiled in ghee can also be taken. The fresh juice of the leaf can also be orally taken (L.Misra et.al, 1959). The leaf decoction can be used for washing and can also be taken orally (J.F.Dastur, 1970). For treatment of black scar on the face and also boils, the latex along with turmeric paste can be externally applied (L.Misra et.al. 1959). The latex can be mixed with honey and can give relief for toothache (J.F.Dastur, 1962). The latex can also be used to treat snake poisoning (Thirugnanam, 1995).

Other uses



The leaves and stem of the shrub can be utilized as green manure. The stem fiber is very useful for rope making. The floss of the fruit can be used as stuffing material (Krishnamurthy, 1993). The plant is also eminently suitable to be grown near sewage treatment plants (Boralkar, 1994). The leaves, flowers, root and bark oil contain antimicrobial and nematicidal effect (Asolkar, et.al. 1992). A poultice of the slightly roasted leaves can be applied for treatment of inflammations, painful joints and muscles. In addition, the leaf juice is very effective in the treatment of skin diseases and sores in the mouths of children (Shanmugham, 1989).

Conclusion

This species, namely, *calotroopis gigantea* grows profusely all over India. Even though it is readily available, it is not being fully utilized by the people. It is considered to be a useless shrub and avoided as a medicinal herb. However, in ancient India, the latex of the shrub was used to treat scratches by thorns or other wounds. This species is very useful both culturally and for purposes of medicine. Hence it is necessary to make full use of the various properties of this useful plant.

