



Int. J. Modn. Res. Revs.

Volume 2, Issue 11, pp 486-491, November, 2014

ISSN: 2347-8314

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

FLORISTIC COMPOSITION AND PRACTICES ON THE SELECTED SACRED GROVES OF PERAMBALUR DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

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Article History: Received 2nd October, 2014, Accepted 31st October, 2014, Published 1st November, 2014

ABSTRACT

Sacred groves are small patches of forest left untouched by the local inhabitants to be protected by the local village folk deities who play a vital role in the conservation and preservation of species diversity. Field studies on floristic composition and ethno botanical practices of the sacred groves of Kunnam taluk, Perambalur district of Tamil Nadu were undertaken. A total of 113 plant species belonging to 102 genera distributed among 51 families were recorded. The mode of mythical and therapeutic uses and conservation practices of these plants by the local people has been discussed.

Keywords: Floristic composition, sacred groves, Ethno medicine, Medicinal plants, medicinal uses, conservation.

1. INTRODUCTION

India is one of the twelve mega-biodiversity countries of the world having rich vegetation with a wide variety of plants. Biodiversity in India particularly is important for its religious, spiritual and other traditional uses. Many plants and animals have significance and are considered sacred on account of their association with different deities. In India, conservation of plants and animals by the indigenous people is very common. They believe trees are the place of gods. Sacred groves are the example of this conservation. These are the locked information sites, about secret of herbs and their medicinal uses by their forefathers as traditional medicine and how the herbs used by sorcery for removing spirit as well as specter. Sacred groves are patches of natural vegetation surviving in the man-modified landscapes. They owe their preservation to their perceived importance to some form of divinity. Hughes and Subhash Chandran (1997) define 'sacred groves' as segments of landscape containing trees and other forms of life and geographical features, that are delimited and protected by human societies believing that preserving such a patch of vegetation in a relatively undisturbed state is necessary for expressing ones relation to the divine or to nature. The only means to rectify the loss is to achieve conservation of biological diversity, as in the case of protected areas where in the aspect deals with reintroduction some species, restore ecosystem and to manage or to eradicate previously introduced plants and animal. In India we come across two types of conservational

aspects ex-situ and in-situ. Most of ex-situ sites are zoos and Botanical parks. In situ conservation encompasses national preserves and sacred groves. Sacred groves are temple forests or patches of national climax forests preserved as a product of above described beliefs by the local people (Gadgil and Vartak, 1975). Declaring a patch of forest near the villages as sacred and protecting it on the grounds of religious and cultural beliefs is an age old practice with the tribal communities in the north-eastern hill region of India. They occur chiefly in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Karnataka, Kerala, Madya Pradesh, Maharastra, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. These sacred groves in existence in the region since time immemorial and are considered to be the relic of the original forest vegetation of the region. These are among the few least disturbed forest patches in the region serving as the original treasure house of biodiversity.

The sacred groves are extremely rich in floral and faunal elements. The species content in these sacred groves is very high the scared groves contain several valuable medicinal and other economically important plants. Some of the endangered taxa are to be found only in the sacred groves. Apart from trees and shrubs, herbs, a wide variety of lianas, orchids, ferns, bryophytes and microbes around in these sacred forests. The sacred grove biodiversity compares favorably with the biodiversity in the core area of some of the biosphere reserves in this region, which are being managed by the state forest departments. This bears testimony to the efficacy of the traditional forests management systems practiced by the local communities. Indian sacred groves are sometimes associated with temples, monasteries, shrines or with burial grounds. Sacred groves

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may be loosely used to refer to other natural habitat protected on religious grounds.

One of the most important traditional uses of sacred groves was that it acted as a repository for various Ayurvedic medicines. The vegetation cover helps reduce soil erosion and prevents desertification. A source of replenishable resource like fruits and honey. It was taboo to hunt or chop wood. The groves are often associated with ponds and streams and meet water requirements of local communities they sometimes help in recharging aquifers as well. The many of the groves are looked upon as abode of Hindu gods. In the recent past a number of them been partially cleared for construction of shrines and temples.

Biodiversity is a natural attribute of ecosystem and is the product of interaction between social and natural system (Sajise, 1995) and as such, biodiversity has close links with local ecological economic and sociocultural functions. Ecological functions include hydrological cycles, food chain, vegetation succession, and soil erosion control and climate regulation. The functions related to direct human use include foods, medicines, handicrafts, fuel wood and timber for furniture and house construction. Cultural functions include the creation of symbolic values, regulations of human spirit interaction and aesthetic and recreations functions.

The aim is to raise awareness on the ecological and socio-economic significance of these groves to humankind, cultural events and religious practices associated with each of the groves would be organized with the participation of the communities concerned. Conservation linked to religious and cultural beliefs has been important in preserving biodiversity in different regions of India. The fact that many of the species conserved are vital for the ecosystem functioning in the area changes the role of these groves from being purely religious spaces, to those which also have a larger 'ecological' role to fulfill.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Description of The study area Thunijampadi Sadaiyappar koil, Kadur Padaikathavar kovil and Kovilpalayam Ayyanar koil located at Kunnam Taluk, Perambalur district TamilNadu. The district boundaries of Perambalur are east Ariyalur district, west Tiruchirappalli and Salem districts, North Cuddalore and Salem South Tiruchirappalli and Thanjavur district. Its geographical limit is 11 °14'00. 59' N Latitude, 78° 52'59.85'E Longitude, with elevation ranging 133.3 M altitude above mean sea level. The temperature ranges from 31-38 ° C during summer and 25-32 ° C during winter. The average humidity ranged from 32 to 34% during November to December. Annual rainfall is ranging from 800 to 861 mm.

The floristic vegetation of the sacred groves stand as tropical dry every green forest with local variations. It comprises of trees, shrubs, climbers and herbs were also recorded. In all the three areas plant species were collected, identified and systematic enumeration was made with the available monographs relevant literatures and taxonomic revisions (Gamble *et al* 1915, Mathew 1982). Their specific medicinal values were verified with the knowledge of local people who are well versed with the uses of these plants and also after

confirming the details available in the recent studies (Srivastava and Chouksey 1999; Goel *et al.*, 1999; Ramakrishnan and Ganesan, 2001).

3. RESULTS

The present study has been carried out on the plants species that are found in 3 Sacred groves namely Thunijampadi Sadaiyappar koil, Kadur Padaikathavar koil and, Kovilpalayam Ayyanar koil of Kunnam taluk, Perambalur district Tamil Nadu. A total of 113 plant species belonging to 102 genera distributed among 51 families were recorded (Table -1). Based on the habit classification of the 113 plants, maximum numbers of species were herbs (54sp), followed by trees (29sp), shrub (17sp), climbers (13sp). Among the families, Acanthaceae and Euphorbiaceae was most dominant comprising 6 genera and 7species and 5genera 7species followed by Asteraceae represented by 6species Solanaceae, Fabaceae, Malvaceae represented by 5species,

Apocynaceae, Mimosoideae, Lamiaceae, caesalpinaceae, represented by 4species Moraceae, Nyctaginaceae, Rutaceae, Verbinaceae represented by 3speices, Arecaceae, Ascelpiadaceae, Amaranthaceae, Boraginaceae, Convolvulaceae, Cleomaceae, Liliaceae, Lythraceae, Menispermaceae, Oleaceae, Poaceae, Rubiaceae, Rhamnaceae represented by 2species Alangiaceae, Anacardiaceae, Cyperaceae, Commelinaceae, Casuarinaceae, Cannaceae, Caryophyllaceae, Cactaceae, Loganiaceae, Myrtaceae, Molluginaceae, Moringaceae, Meliaceae, Oxalidaceae, Papavaraceae, Portulacaceae, Passifloraceae, scrophulariaceae, Sapindaceae, Sapotaceae, Zygophyllaceae, Vitaceae, Cucurbitaceae and Arstolociaceae represented by 1 species. Maximum numbers (101 sps) were recorded in the Thunijapadi sadaiyappar koil grove followed by Kadur padaikathavar koil grove (90sps), Kovilpalayam ayyanar koil grove (85sps). *Albizia amara*, *Alangium Salvifolium* *Cynodon dactylon* were common in 3groves *Cardiospermum helicacabum*, *Aegle marmelos*, *Syzygium cummi*, *Tamarindus indica*, *Zizipus jujuba*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Cassia auriculata*, were recorded common in 2 groves, based on the utilization 81 species recorded were used for medical purposes. *Tamarindus indica* (puli), *Syzygium cuminii*, (naval) and *Madhuca longifolia* (Iuppai), believed as the abode of the ghost. *Azadirachta indica* (vaambu) and *Aloe vera* (sothukatthalai) are used for warding off of the evil spirit, *Gloriosa superba* (Kalappai kizhangu) were considered poisonous.

4. DISCUSSION

The study of mythological associations or faith in plants among the folk is the fascinating area with immense possibilities of insight into the causes of these associations. In and around perambalur district, many researchers have studied the tree worship, plant in offering; sacred groves and biodiversity conservation; ecological traditions, village arts and crafts; conservation of plant genetic resources; and ethno medicinal aspects.

In the present work, survey of floristic composition and practices of some unreported sacred groves of Kunnam thaluk, Perambalur district was carried out. Such willingness

Table;1 list of plant species recorded in the selected sacred groves of Perambalur District

Sl. No.	NAME OF THE PLANT SPECIES	FAMILY	LOCAL NAME	PARTS USED	THERAPEUTIC USES
1	<i>Abrus precatorius</i> L.	Fabaceae	Gundumani	Seed ,leaves	External wounds, Bite (snake)
2	<i>Abutilon indicum</i> (L.) Sp indicum	Malvaceae	Thutthi	Leaves, root,	Cold, stops bleeding in wounds.
3	<i>Acacia leucophloea</i> (Roxp.) willd	Mimosoideae	Velvaalam(white)	Root	Leucoderma
4	<i>Acalypha indica</i> L.	Euphorbiaceae	Kuppaimaeni	Leaves.	Skin disease purgative.
5	<i>Achyranthes aspera</i> .L	Amaranthaceae	Naaiyurivi	Leaves, root	Scorpion bite gumbleding,sacrificed plant
6	<i>Adhatoda vassica</i> Nees.	Acanthaceae	Adaathoda	leaves	Cough and asthma
7	<i>Aegle marmelos</i> (L.) corr.	Rutaceae	Vilvam	Fruit, bark	Diarrhoea, constipation
8	<i>Aerva lanata</i> (L.) Juss <i>Alangium Salviifolium</i> (L.f)	Amaranthaceae	Poolapoo	Whole plant	Cure kidney stone , diuretics ,poisonous
9	<i>agnerian</i>	Alangiaceae	Alingl	Bark , flower	Rheumatic fever, eye diseases
10	<i>Albizia amara</i> (Roxb.) Bovin	Mimosoideae	Usilai	leaves	Cleaning the hair scarified plant
11	<i>Aloe vera</i> (L.)Burm.f.	Liliaceae	Sotthukattalalai	leaves	Cooling ,stomach ache used against evil sprit
12	<i>Ammannia baccifera</i> L. <i>Andrographis paniculata</i>	Lythraceae	Neermulli	Whole plant	Fever , insect bite as on ant venom
13	(Burm.f.)Wall.exnes <i>Anisomeles malabarica</i> (L.)R.Br.ex	Acanthaceae	Siriyangai	whole plants	Febrifuge stomach ache, tonic, antidote to cobra venom.
14	<i>sims</i>	Libiateae	Peimerati	Leaves	Prolonged rheumatic fever, evil sprits
15	<i>Aristolochia bracteolata</i> Lam.	Aristolochiaceae	aduthinnapalai	Leaves, root, seed.	Irregular monthly menstrual periods and intermittent fever, antidote for snake and insect venoms
16	<i>Argemone mexicana</i> L.	Papaveraceae	Piramathandu	Roots, seed ,milky juice, oil	diuretics, anathematic, anti dote, chronic skin disease, piles, stomach ache
17	<i>Azadirahcta indica</i> A. Adr Juss.	Meliaceae	Vembu	Whole plant	Multi purpose considered as a goodness tree
18	<i>Bacopa monnieri</i> (L.) pennell.	Scrophulariaceae	Neerpirame	Whole plant	Nervous memory enhancer rental disorder
19	<i>Biophytum sensitivum</i> (L.)DC	Oxalidaceae	Thotasurunki	Whole plant	Wound healing skin disease, inflammation
20	<i>Boerhavia diffusa</i> L.	Nyctaginaceae	Mookaratai	Root, leaves	Jaundice, child birth ,liver complaint
21	<i>Carissa carandas</i> L.	Apocynaceae	Kelakai	Latex, fruit	Fruits edible, latex used for wound healing
22	<i>Cassia auriculata</i> L.	Caesalpinaceae	Avaram chedi	Leaves, flower	Anti diabetics, Skin cracks, heart diseases
23	<i>Cassia fistula</i> L.	Caesalpinaceae	Sarakkontrai	leaves	Cure Ring worm , urinary diseases, diabetes
24	<i>Cardiospermum halicacabum</i> L.	Sapindaceae	Mudakkathan	Whole plant	Rheumatism
25	<i>Catharanthus roseus</i> (L.)Don.	Apocynaceae	Nithyakalyani	Flower, roots	Cure excess urination, body weakness, and abnormal appetite, anti tumours.
26	<i>Cissus quadrangularis</i> L.	Vitaceae	Perandai	Whole plant	Stomach problem join the broken bone
27	<i>Clalotropis gigantea</i> (L.) R.Br.	Asclepiadaceae	Eruku	Root, bark, leaves, juice of plant and flower.	Purgative cures leprosy, leucoderma, ulcer, piles.
28	<i>Cleome gynandra</i> L.	Cleomaceae	Nalavalai	Whole plants	Clear dropsy, leucoderma, ulcers, and piles, cure rheumatic fever, cold, tape worms, round worms, and cough septic sores.
29	<i>Cleome viscosa</i> L.	Cleomaceae	Naikoduku	Leaves, seed	Ear ache, eye troubles, skin diseases.
30	<i>Clitoria ternatiae</i> L.	Fabaceae	Sangupoo	Whole plant	Emetic, cathartic, purgative and chronic bronchitis, laxative
31	<i>Coccinia grandis</i> (L.) voigt	Cucurbitaceae	kovai	Whole plant	Expectorant, antispasmodic , ant periodic-diuretics
32	<i>Commelina benghalensis</i> L.	Commelinaceae	Kanavzhali	Whole plant	Laxative, burn, boils, itches, septic wounds.
33	<i>Croton bonplandianus</i> Baillon	Euphorbiaceae	Rail Poondu	Leaves, latex	Acicular disease, wound healing, paralysis, rheumatism
34	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> (L.)Pers.	Poaceae	Arukam pul	Whole plant	Blood purifier, scabs, itches, eczema, dry skin, irregular periods menses
35	<i>Cyperus rotundus</i> L.	Cyperaceae	Korai	Bulb. fruit	Diuretics, promote brain power, increase semen quantity
36	<i>Datura metal</i> L.	Solanaceae	Oomathai	Leaves, fruit.	Mental disorder , skin disease piles
37	<i>Delonix elata</i> (L)Gamble	Caesalpinaceae	Vaathanarayanan	Whole plant.	Pain and swelling of rheumatism, gas trouble
38	<i>Eclipta prostrata</i> (L.) L	Asteraceae	Karisalankanni	Leaves	Cure all liver and spleen disease , anaemia jaundice black dense hair
39	<i>Euphorbia hitra</i> L.	Euphorbiaceae	Amman pacharisi	Whole plant	Anti asthmatic pectoral, in worms bowel complaints and cough, breast pain

40	<i>Evolvulus alsinoides (L.)L.</i>	convolvulaceae	Vishnukaranthi	Whole plant Fruits, pulp, bark, leaves	For all kind of fever, acrid, increasing brain power Appetite, astringent, stimulant, stomach ache, whooping cough, bits of venomous insects and reptiles, liver disease, carminative, purgative and soporific
41	<i>Feronia elephantum Corr.</i>	Rutaceae	Velam maram		Inflammations, leprosy, nose disease, dysentery, liver problem gum bleeding, mouth ulcers, vomiting
42	<i>Ficus bengalensis L.</i>	Moraceae	Alamaram	Root, latex, fruit	Anti diabetics, dysentery, blood stained urine and excess secretion of acid
43	<i>Ficus racemosa L.</i>	Moraceae	Atthi maram	Fruit, milk, seed	Wounds, itches, skin inflammation, skin eruption, throat infection, bronchitis asthma.
44	<i>Ficus religiosa L.</i>	Moraceae	Arasu	Leaves, root, bark, Fruit	
45	<i>Gloriosa superba L.</i>	Liliaceae	Senganthal malar Thaelkodukku	Rhizome, seed	Skin disease, labours pain, general debility Cure itches and wounds cure pimples
46	<i>Heliotropium indicum L.</i>	Boraginaceae Convolvulaceae	poondu Cirutali	Leaves Leaves	venereal disease anti dot to the poison Internal ulcer, burning sensation, sores in mouth, body heat, increases and secretion of breast milk.
47	<i>Ipomoea obscura(L.) ker</i>				Dysentery, blood pressure, vomiting, nausea, gonorrhoea, ulcer
48	<i>Ixora coccinea L.</i>	Rubiaceae	Idli poo	Flower, root	
49	<i>Jatropha gossypifolia L.</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Kattamanaku	Latex, leaves, oil	Mouth ulcer scabies, wounds Skin disease, asthma, cough, stomach problem
50	<i>Justicia procambens (L.)</i>	Acanthaceae	Sivanar vaambu	Whole plant	
51	<i>Lantana camara L.</i>	Verbenaceae	Unnichedi	Leaves	Skin infection, Rheumatoid Headache, cold, cough, asthma, scorpion sting, antipyretic, reduce fevers
52	<i>Leucas aspera (willd.)L.</i>	Lamiaceae	Thumbai	Whole plant	Burning, steam, anti inflammatory, mouth sore, small wounds, scratches, growth dense hair, leucoderma
53	<i>Lowsonia inermis L.</i>	Lythraceae	Maruthani	Leaf, flower ,seed	Care of the skin, alcoholic drink, chocolates, imbalance of thinking
54	<i>Madhuca longifolia (Koenig.) macbr</i>	Sapotaceae	Eluppai	Stem, bark ,flower	Snakebite, knee pain
55	<i>Mimosa pudica L.</i>	Mimosoideae	Thotta chinungi	Root, leaves Leaves, fruits	Heal wounds, itches and back pain, leucoderma, strengthen the teeth and gum
56	<i>Morinda pubescens J.E. smith</i>	Rubiaceae	Nunamaram	,root	Antiseptic and sores, anticancer, antitoxic and diuretic agent, mouth infections
57	<i>Mullugo pentaphylla L.</i>	Aizoaceae	Valukai keerai	Whole plant	Stomachic, camminative, astringent to bowel, ant bilious, hair tonic, piles, skin diseases
58	<i>Nyctanthes arbor- tristis L.</i>	Oleaceae	Pavala malli	Flower	Headache, fast heart palpitation and sleeplessness, chest pain and cough, leucorrhoea, kidney disorders
59	<i>Ocimum sanctum L</i>	Lamiaceae	Thulasi	Leaves	
60	<i>Ocimum tenuiflorum L.</i>	Lamiaceae	Naaithulasi	Leaves	Cold, cough, asthma, fever Skin diseases asthma, whooping cough, gonorrhoea
61	<i>Opuntia stricta (Haw.) How</i>	Cactaceae	Sapathikalli	Flower, fruit	
62	<i>Passiflora foetida L.</i>	Passifloraceae	Moskattaaan	Leaves	Vietnamese folk to relieve sleeping
63	<i>Phyllanthus amarus schum & Thon</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Keezhanelli	Whole plant	Anaemic, jaundice, dropsy Appetizing, tonic, diuretic, laxative, inflammations, remedy against earache
64	<i>Physalis minima L</i>	Solanaceae	Sodukuthakali	Leaves Leaves, bark, flower	
65	<i>Pongamia pinnata (L.) pierre</i>	Fabaceae	Pungamaram		Skin diseases, sacred tree
66	<i>Ricinus communis.L.</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Aamanaku	seed	Purgative, rheumatism
67	<i>Sesbania grandiflora (L.) Poiret</i>	Fabaceae	Agathi Arivalmunai	Leaves	Cure sun burn, over heat of body, hyper acidity, chickenpox, headache Dysentery, prolepses fauns, bleeding piles, gonorrhoea
68	<i>Sida cordata L</i>	Malvaceae	Poondu	leaves	Cut wounds, stop bleeding, antidote for snake venom
69	<i>Sida cordifolia L</i>	Malvaceae	Sitramutti	Leaves Leaves, flower	Stoma tic, astringent, alterative, anathematic and diuretic, .cure fever cold
70	<i>Solanum surattense Burm.f</i>	solanaceae	Kantankathari	,fruit ,root	
71	<i>Solanum torvum Sw.</i>	solanaceae	Sundai	Leaves ,fruit	Skin diseases, vermifuge Chronic bronchitis, throat problem, pluropneumonia in cattle, tuberculosis, promote body strength, brain power
72	<i>Solanum trilobatum L.</i>	solanaceae	Thuduvilai	Whole plant Leaves, bark, Fruit, seed	Diabetes, stomachic, diuretic, frequent urination
73	<i>Syzygium Cummi (L.) Skeels</i>	Myrtaceae	Naval maram		Laxative, ant bilious, car native laxative, diuretic
74	<i>Tamarindus indica L.</i>	Caesalpinaceae	Puli	Leaves, fruit Leaves, flower, Root	Stomach pain, cure ailments due to acid, spleen and kidney, loose motion
75	<i>Teprosia purpurea L</i>	Fabaceae	Kolingi	Root	Rheumatism, jaundice, anaemia, chronic fever
76	<i>Tinospora cordifolia (Wild) Hook F.Thomson</i>	Menispermaceae	Seenthil	Leaves, seed	

77	<i>Tribulus terrestris L.</i>	Zygophyllaceae	Nerunchimul	Whole plant	Aphrodisiac, appetizer, digestive, urinary.
78	<i>Tridax procumbens L.</i>	Asteraceae	Vettukaya thalai	Whole plant	Wounds caused by cuts and scratches Clear phlegm, diarrhoea, will help remove all the venom by vomiting
79	<i>Tylophora indica (Burm.f.) Merr.</i>	Asclepiadaceae	Nancharuppan	Whole plant	Antibacterial antifungal, indigestion in children, asthma.
80	<i>Vitex negundo L.</i> <i>Ziziphus jujuba (L.) Var.</i>	Verbenaceae	Nochi	Leaves, stem	Fruits edible, cooling bark used for skin infection.
81	<i>mauritiana Lam.</i>	Rhamnaceae	Elanthai	Bark, fruit	

to exercise power on behalf of their devotee's marks these deities excellent kuladeyvam (lit" family/lineage gods"). Whether local resident devotees typically return to the temple of their kuladeyvam for the god's annual festival and to conduct or announce important life cycle rituals. The groves are thus frequently a back drop for rituals such as ear-papering and head shaving ceremony for new children (accompanied by sacrifice of a goat or chicken) and the presentation of wedding invitations both of which are key opportunities to express gratitude to the god. In the present survey different forms of deities like Sadaiyappar, Ayyanar, and Padaikathvar, made up of stone were also found. People take vows (promise) for their own wish. If the wish is fulfilled, they submit terracotta's. The terracotta mostly are horses, dogs, cats, bulls, elephants and parts of human beings mainly hands and legs etc.

The present study revealed that the local people living near by the sacred grove are using 81 species of medicinal plants belonging to families 51 to cure various diseases (Table-1). Medicine preparations made from different parts of medicinal plants included whole fresh plant, flower, leaves, bark, fruit, root and tubers were used for treatment of various diseases by the village people. However, fresh plant parts were preferred over dried ones for the preparation of most of the drugs.

Gastro intestinal problems like digestive problems, diarrhea, dysentery, stomach ache and constipation were treated using specific herbal prescription by the rural peoples. Antidotes for insect and animal bite like wasp sting, dog bite, scorpion sting and snake bite were prepared using herbal medicine by the rural people from the sacred grove. Respiratory problem like cough, cold, bronchitis and asthma also used medicinal plants swellings, leucorrhoea, skin problems, joint pains, urinary diseases, diuretic, bleeding piles, fever, diabetes treatment of boils, paralysis, nervous system, sores, throat problem, parasitic worm, earache, teeth ache and menstrual problems also treated by herbal medicines by the rural peoples in the grove. Effectiveness of the herbal drug was connected to nature of the disease and dose response. Doses are differing from patient to patient from time based on the cause and effectiveness of the drugs. Floristic study of vegetation is important to determine the distribution of food plants for wildlife (Ejtehadi *et al.*, 2005) and prerequisite for much fundamental research in tropical community (Jayakumar *et al.*, 2011). The present findings are comparable with other studies in sacred groves of Tamil Nadu and other regions of India. In Tamil Nadu, several studies with respect to floristic inventory were reported includes 260 species in 176 genera and 62 families from Malliganatham (John Britto *et al.* 2001a), 224 species in 175 genera and 63 families from Vamban (John Britto *et al.* 2001b), 35 species in 32 genera and 22 families (SridharReddy and Parthasarathy, 2006), 77 species in 61

genera and 30 families (Mani and Parthasarathy, 2006) from 4 sacred groves of Coromandel coast, 265 species from 50 sacred groves collectively (Karthikeyan and Tangavelu, (2011), 106 species belonging to 97 genera and 54 families from Managanampatti, Nadiamman and Suranviduthi village (Vinothkumar *et al.*, 2011) of Pudukottai district, 98 species in 38 families and 76 genera from 33 sacred groves of Theni district (Manikandan *et al.*, 2011), 98 species in 87 genera and 43 families from 11 miniature sacred groves (Sukumaran and Jeeva, 2008) of Kanniyakumari district, 133 plant species from sacred groves in Pallipatty village of Maduari district (Ganesan *et al.*, 2007). Analyses on the mode of oral application of the herbal preparations mostly leaves are utilized, it appears that the people had some idea about the systematic mode of the disease/disorder. In addition to pure herbal preparations, in some cases the drug was administered along with milk, ghee, honey, coconut oil, curd, etc.,

These supplement ingredients may be used to enhance the effect of the herbal preparations are simply used to make the preparation palatable. However, the extract role of these materials in curing the diseases in not clearly known as with systematic investigation of the characterization on the active ingredients have not yet been made the traditional uses of plants as herbal remedies has further declined due to a scarcity of species, which is caused by multifarious human activity coupled with natural calamities like droughts and overgrazing by sheep, goats and other domestic animals in the state, thus threatening the diversity of the herbal medicines. It is in this context that conservation and scientific verification of rare and lesser known medicinal plants assume greater significance.

5.CONCLUSION:

The present study deals with floristic composition of flowering plants grown in Thunijampadi Sadayapar koil, Kadur Padaikathavar koil, Kovilpalayam Ayyanar koil sacred grove, located in Kunnam taluk at Perambalur district and indigenous knowledge documented through questionnaire and personal interviews indicated that rural traditional healers used the plants to cure many diseases and various animals, insect bites. These sacred groves comprising of 113 plant species belonging to 51 families with 102 genera some rare threatened and endangered plants are confirmed to this grove only. The attendant cultural rites and religious rituals have perpetuated the status of the sacred grove which has ensured the protection of the grove vegetation.

6.ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

I express my sincere thanks to the department of botany Government arts college Ariyalur for providing necessary facilities

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