

IMPORTANCE OF PALM LEAF LITERATURE COLLECTION REGARDING AYURVEDIC MEDICINES IN REGIONAL LANGUAGES

MR. LAKSHMI NARAYAN, INDIA¹

The current world wide trend to utilize natural plant remedies has created a need to collect information about the therapeutical properties of plants. People believe that, the natural medicines are safe and are more dependable than the synthetic medicines. In India the use of plants as medicines dates back to Vedic Age. Ayurveda is a branch of *Atharva Veda*. We can find thousands of medicinal plants mentioned in ayurvedic classical texts which were used against variety of ailments in form of powders, extracts, decoctions etc.

However among several thousand Medicinal plants mentioned in Ayurvedic texts only a few hundred plants are identified and the identification of 300 to 400 plants are confirmed. In Ayurvedic classical texts the names all the plants are in Sanskrit and most of them are yet to be identified. Many of the Ayurvedic Sanskrit classical texts translated to regional languages (Kannnada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Gujarat etc.) are still on palm leaves. All such palm leaf books are century old and are in a perishable condition due to negligence, normal wear and tare etc. In all these books there will be Sanskrit *slokas* regarding medicines with explanations in the regional language. In such books we can find the Sanskrit names of medicinal plants with regional names. Study of these palm leaf books may help to identify many of the medicinal plants which are not yet identified.

Hence, this is the right time to collect such unpublished palm leaf books and to record the contents before they are lost. I have seen a number of palm leaf books with local vaidyas and recorded the contents; a few of them are '*Roma Rishi Eka Moolike Vaidyam*', '*Mahamantravadi sridhara deva virachita vaidya sastram*' and '*veera bhatti vaidya sastram*'.

¹ Mr. Narayan, was unable to participate in the meeting due to personal reasons. However he did submit his abstract for the meeting. He works at NIMHANS, Bangalore. Collecting palm leaf manuscripts is his passion.