

BILVA IN INDIAN TRADITION

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Plants are recognised as part and parcel of Nature Goddess in Indian tradition. *Bilva* (*Aegle marmelos*, Linn.) is one of the common sacred plants mentioned in Sanskrit Literature. It is a middle-sized slender aromatic armed tree growing to a height of 15 to 25 feet. The plant has both cultural and medicinal value and drew attention of healers and spiritual leaders. The reference of *Bilva* occurs in Vedic texts, *Yajurveda Samhitā*, *Atharvaveda*, in *Brāhmaṇas* and *Kalpasūtras*, which shows its popularity. It also finds mention in the *Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. Modern era scientists have also understood its importance and more researches are involved on this plant. Information found in Sanskrit Literature would be of interest to modern day scholars.

Key words: *Bilva*, Culture, Medicinal, Sacred, Tantra, Tradition

1. INTRODUCTION

Bilva (*Aegle marmelos*, Linn.) is one of the most famous plants that is referred in Vedic literature, epics, purāṇas, and Āyurvedic texts of ancient India. This is a known plant for medicinal values, and close to spiritual leaders for its aromatic smell and wide uses of fruits to maintain health and happiness. It was only due to its medical and spiritual importance that *Bilva* became one of the most sacred trees for those believing in Indian Tradition. Modern era scientists have also understood its importance and are busy doing researches on this plant. Information found in Sanskrit Literature would be of great use to modern day scientists.

The word *Bilva* is derived from 'bil'¹ to split. Yāska derived this word from *bhr* 'to support' or 'to nourish', or from *bhid* 'to split'². Showing

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importance of *Bilva*, *Atharvaveda* says-- “*Mahān vai bhadro bilvo*”³ i.e. A man doing good to all is great and benevolent like *Bilva* tree.

It is a middle sized slender aromatic armed tree. It grows to a height of 15 to 25 feet. Its branches have many knots all along and they grow rather crookedly from the main stock and bear straight and strong thorns. The trunk has a bluish hue. The leaves are alternative on either side of the stem and they have three leaflets, the two laterals being equal size and the middle one, a little bigger. Lamina or the leaf blade has numerous translucent pellucid glands all over are filled with fragrant, volatile oil; as a result, the leaves themselves are fragrant. The leaves are let off in the winter, the fresh leaves sprouting forth in abundance during spring and summer. In the early rainy season, the greenish white flowers burst forth; they are greenish white, and are attractively fragrant. It is pulpy within and filled with many seeds, which have gum. Fruit is hard, greenish and egg like. They are 2-5 inches in diameter. Pulp is sweet, thick, and orange coloured. From fruits, pickles and *murabbā* or syrupy preserves in sugar are prepared. *Bilva* (*Aegle marmelos*, Linn.) belongs to the citrus family Rutaceae. The golden coloured *bel* fruit resembles a golden apple and hence the generic name *Aegle*. The specific name *marmelos* is derived from marmelosin contained in the fruit. Root, bark, leaves and fruits are hypoglycaemic, astringent and febrifuge. Root, stem and bark are antidiarrhoeal and antivenin. Leaf is anti-inflammatory, expectorant, anticatarrhal, antiasthmatic, antiulcerous and ophthalmic. Flower is emetic. Unripe fruit is stomachic and demulcent. Ripe fruit is antigonorrhoeal, cardiotonic, restorative, laxative, antitubercular, antidyenteric, and antiscorbutic. Seed is anthelmintic and antimicrobial.

2. SYNONYMS FOR *BILVA*

The *Soḍhala Nighaṅṭuḥ*⁴ gives synonyms of *Bilva*. According to it:

bilve śalāṭuḥ śāṅyo hṛdyagaṃdho mahāphalaḥ
śailūṣaḥ śrīphalaḥ śmrāhvaḥ karkataḥ pūtimārutaḥ
gaṃdhagarbhoatha mālūraḥ satyadharmā dharāruhaḥ
vātasāroarucīkaśca proktaḥ somaharitakaḥ

(*SN Dravya*, 166-167)

‘Bilva, Śalāṭu, Śāṅḍilya, Hṛdyagandha, Mahāphala, Śailūṣa, Śrīphala, Śmrāhva, Karkata, Pūtimāruta, Gandhagarbha, Mālūra, Satyadharmā,

Dharāruha, Vātasāra, Arucika, Somaharītaka (are known as synonyms for *Bilva*)’.

The *Kaiyadeva Nighaṇṭu*⁵ has also given the list of synonyms of *Bilva* through following verses:

*lakṣmīphalo hr̥dyagandho gandhagarbho mahāphalaḥ
sailūṣaḥ śrigandhaphalo māluṛo goharītakī
vātasāro nīlamallī satyadharmā dharāruhaḥ
mahākapittho dhaviko rucīkaḥ sarvarūpavān
bilvaḥ śalātuḥ śāṇḍilyaḥ karkato granthilo mataḥ
sadāphalaḥ kṛṣṇamukhaḥ kaṇṭakī nīlamallikā*

(KN. Au., 15-18)

‘*Lakṣmīphala, Hr̥dyagandha, Gandhagarbha, Mahāphala, Sailūṣa Śrigandhaphala, Mālura, Goharītakī, Vātasāra, Nīlamallī, Satyadharmā, Dharāruha, Mahākapittha, Dhavika, Rucīka, Sarvarūpavāna, Bilva, Śalātu, Śāṇḍilya, Karkata, Granthila, Mata, Sadāphala, Kṛṣṇamukha, Kaṇṭakī, Nīlamallikā* (are the synonyms for *Bilva*)’.

Each synonym has special significance. It is thorny, *Kaṇṭakī* (*kaṇṭakāḥ santyasmin*). It grows even in hilly areas, *Śailūṣaḥ* (*śailepi vasatīti*). Its branches are nodular, *Granthilaḥ* (*granthimān kāṇḍe*). Leaves are trifoliate, *Tripatraḥ* (*trīṇi patrakāṇyasya*). Leaves are aromatic, *Gandhapatraḥ* (*gandhavanti patrānyasya*). It is offered to Lord Śiva, *Śiveṣṭaḥ* (*bhagavataḥ śivasyeṣṭaḥ priyaḥ*). Fruits are globose, *Kucamaḥ* (*kucena stanena mīyate upamīyate iti*). Fruits are large, *Mahāphala* (*bṛhat phalamsya*). Fruits are like that of *Kapittha*, *Mahākapittha* (*bṛhat kapitthasadr̥śaḥ*). Fruits are aromatic, *Hr̥dyagandha* (*hr̥dyo manoharo gandho asya*). Fruit has hard rind, *Karkataḥ* (*kaṭhinatvagphalaḥ*). Fruits ripen in a year and as such they are seen always hanging on the tree, *Śalātuḥ* (*āmaṇ phalaṇ sadā dṛśyate asya*). Fruits is seen on the tree round the year, *Sadāphalaḥ* (*sadā phalānaṃ vidyamānatvāt*). Fruits are carminative, *Pūtimārutaḥ* (*pūtiḥ durgandhiḥ māruto apānavāyuḥ niḥsartyanena*). Fruits are useful in bowel ailments, *Māluraḥ* (*malameva mālaṇ taddūrīkarotīti*). Fruits are useful in veterinary practice for abdominal complaints, *Goharītakī* (*gavāṇ pasūnāṇ harītakī koṣ-hadoṣaharaṇī*).⁶

It is called *Śrīphala*, as it bears auspicious fruits. As the fruit is regarded holy, it is called *Śāṇḍilya* a holy and much respected Brāhmin, in

whose name there occurs a whole clan or a family or a *gotra* called Śāṇḍilya.⁷

3. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The reference of *Bilva* occurs in Vedic texts. It is mentioned profusely in *Yajurveda Samhitā*⁸, *Atharvaveda*⁹, in *Brāhmaṇas*¹⁰, *Kalpasūtras* and *Purāṇas*, which shows its popularity. It also finds mention in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*¹¹ and the *Mahābhārata*. Pāṇini¹² and Patañjali¹³ have mentioned it. Later Sanskrit Literature has also mentioned it. *Harṣacarita* talks about gardens of the *Bilva* tree in that era. It says, '*bilvavā-ikāmadhyāste*' (there were gardens of the *Bilva*). It also says that the leaves are used in the worship, '*bilvapallavadāmadalodvāhinaḥ puṇyaviṣayeṣu vāyavaḥ*' (the leaves of *Bilva* are used in the worship of Lord Śiva). According to Kādambarī fruits were favourite to monkeys, '*Kapīnāṃ śrīphalābhilāṣaḥ*'. How *Bilva* looks like is well described in Kādambarī, '*bilvapatradāmabhim̐ bālakamuṇḍaprālambairiva*' (the fruits of *Bilva* are like small heads of the babies). The ripe fruits had particular smell, '*pariṇatamaṣlūrasurabhayaḥ araṇyabhūmayah*'.¹⁴ Number of astrological texts have mentioned this tree. *Br̥hat Samhitā*¹⁵ mentions it at various places.

4. ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

Bilva is one of the sacred trees of India, which are always protected. Felling of *Bilva* tree is strictly prohibited.¹⁵ Plantation of the *Bilva* tree is highly recommended in the *Vrkṣāyurveda*¹⁶:

*yastu samropayedbilvaṃ saṅkara p̄ritikāarakam
tatkuleapi sadā lakṣmīḥ samtiṣ-ētpurapautrikī*

(*Vrikshayurveda*.1.10)

'One who plants *Bilva* tree, which is very beloved to God Śiva, the Goddess of prosperity, Lakṣmi always give blessing to his family. His family is has the enjoyments of healthy offsprings'.

It is referred to as one of the pious trees in the *Baudhāyana Dhamasūtra*¹⁷, *Taitirīya Brāhmaṇa*¹⁸ terms the *Bilva* tree as propitious tree. It is grown in most temples especially of Śiva and house gardens. A pledge taken over the *Bilva* leaf is considered too sacred to be broken.¹⁹ Even a sight of this tree helps in absolving all sorts of sin²⁰-

darśanaṃ bilvavr̥kṣsya sparśanaṃ pāpanāśanam
aghorapāpasaṃhāramekabilvaṃ śivārpaṇam

‘The sight and touch of a *Bilva*-tree absolves the sins, even the most heinous of sins. I offer one leaf of *Bilva* to Śiva’.

5. MEDICINAL PROPERTIES OF *BILVA*

The science of *Āyurveda* values the *Bilva* highly for the medicinal properties contained in its root, fruit and leaves. According to Swami Śivānanda, it is a healing tree, which cures all diseases caused by *vāta* (wind) and gives strength to the body.²¹ The *Bilva* tree is one of the most useful medicinal plants of India. Its medicinal properties have been described in the ancient medical treatises. All parts of this tree-stem, bark, root, leaves and fruit at all stages of maturity-have medicinal virtues and have been used as medicine for long time. The fruit’s medicinal value is very high when it just begins to ripen.

The roots, skin, leaves and the fruits of *Bilva* tree are used for medicinal purposes. *Bilva* is used both internally as well as externally. The fresh juice of its leaves is instilled into the eyes, in conjunctivitis. In the swollen conditions and pain in ribs, the fomentation with its leaves alleviates the pain and oedema. In stomatitis, the gargles with the decoction of its bark skin are beneficial. The sesame oil medicated with *Bilva* fruit is useful in deafness. The roots are extremely useful in *vāta* diseases, insomnia, seizures, hysteria as they calm down the nerves. The decoction of the roots can be given with great benefit, as a complementary herb, in typhoid fever. The roots and the leaves help reducing the fevers. The cedematous conditions of uterus, postpartum infections and leucorrhoea are effectively controlled with the decoction of its roots. The raw fruit of *Bilva* is a renowned panacea for diarrhoea, dysentery, colitis, loss of appetite and abdominal dull pains. The pulp of raw fruit, cooked with sugar is salutary in bacillary dysentery and bleeding piles. A mixture of the juice of its leaves and marica boosts the liver, hence valuable in hepatitis. The decoction of its leaves helps in reducing phlegm in cold, cough and asthma. The skin of *Bakula* and *Bilva* work well as an adjunct in diabetes, when given with the milk. *Bilva* is a well known bitter tonic. The juice of its leaves is given with rock candy, in equal quantity, as a general tonic.²²

It is used in medicines in a variety of ways. The unripe or half ripe fruit is regarded as astringent, digestive and stomachic and as useful in restraining discharges from the alimentary canal. The ripe fruit is described as sweet, aromatic, cooling and laxative. It is not easily digested and has a tendency to cause flatulence. The dried pulp of the fruit, called *Bilva* Peśikā in Sanskrit, is regarded as astringent, and specific for dysentery. The root bark is considered useful in diseases supposed to be caused by deranged air. It constitutes an ingredient of *daśamūla* or the ten roots. The fresh juice of the leaves is given with honey as a domestic laxative and febrifuge.²³

In pharmacological trials, both the fruit and root showed antiamebic and hypoglycaemic activities.²⁴ The plant is rich in alkaloids, among which aegline, marmesin, marmin, and marmelosin are the major ones. Aqueous leaf extract and methanolic extract of the root bark of *A. marmelos* showed preventive effects on myocardial diseases.²⁵

5.1 Varieties of *Bilva*

Śothahara- bilva is useful in all edematous conditions,

Arśoghna- bilva is useful in management of hemorrhoids,

Āsthapanopaga- bilva is useful in enhancing the effect of *Āsthapana*,

Anuvasanopaga- bilva is useful in enhancing the effect of *Anuvasana*,

Grahi- bilva improves assimilation and thus prevents the conditions like passing loose stools,

Balya- bilva increases strength of the body,

Pāchana- bilva is digestive stimulant.²⁶

5.2 *Bilva* combinations²⁷

Bilvapañcakakvatha; Bilvādicūrṇa; Bilvādighruta; Bilva tailā; Bilvmūlādi guṭikā

5.3. *Suśruta Saṃhitā*

5.3.1. Leaf for humoral disorder and internal abscess:

*varuṇādirgaṇo hyeṣa kaphamedonivāraṇaḥ
vinihanti śiraḥśūlagulmābhyantaravidradhīn*

Bilva falls in *Varuṇādi* group of plants; help in eliminating *kapha* and *medas* and cures headache, *gulma* and internal abscess.²⁸

5.3.2. Root to purify humoral disorder and as appetizer:

*bilvāgnimanthaṭiṅ-ukapāṭalāḥ kāśmarī ceti mahat
satiktaṃ kaphavātaghnaṃ pāke laghvagnidīpanaṃ
madhurānurasam caivapañcamūlaṃ mahatsmṛtam*

(SS. Su.38. 68-69)

Mahat (Large) group of five roots drugs are *Bilva*, *Agnimantha*, *Tiṅtuka*, *Pāṭalā* and *Kāśmarī*. They are bitter, pacify *kapha* and *vāta* and easily digestible, are appetizers and are sweet in after taste.²⁹

5.3.3. Unripe Fruit to pacify humoral disorder:

*kaphānilaharaṃ tīkṣṇaṃ snigdhaṃ samgrāhi dīpanaṃ
kaṭutiktakaśāyoṣṇaṃ bālaṃ Bilvamudāhṛtam
vidyāttadeva sampakvaṃ madhurānurasam guru
vidāhi viṣṭambhakarāṃ doṣakṛt pūtimārutam*

(SS. Su. 46. 174-175)

The unripe fruit of *Bilva* pacifies *kapha* and *vāta*, and is sharp, demulcent, constipative and an appetizer; it is acrid, bitter, astringent and hot. The same when ripe is sweet in the secondary taste, is heavy, causes heartburn, produces gurgling sounds in course of digestion, vitiates *doṣas* and causes foetid flatus.³⁰

5.3.4. Cooked leaves for internal swellings and disorders: *Bilvaśāka* is hot sweet, bitter and alleviate *vāta*.³¹ In the ninth month of gestation, the pregnant lady should be made to enter the maternity home built with *Bilva*. The bed should also be prepared of the same wood.³² *Bilva* is an important ingredient of *Dhānvantara ghr̥ta*, which is helpful in curing urinary disorders, oedema, skin diseases (including leprosy), abdominal swellings and enlargements, splenomegaly, abscesses and boils.³³

5.3.5. Reaction of roots for healing of wounds:

*hiṃsrāṃ haridrāṃ kaṭukāṃ balāṃ ca gijihvikāṃ cāpi sabilvamūlāṃ
samhṛtya tailaṃ vipacedvraṅsya saṃśodhanaṃ pūraṅaropaṇaṃ ca*

(SS. Ci. 17. 19-20)

Oil cooked with *hiṃsrā*, *haridrā*, *kaṭukā*, *balā*, *gojihvikā* and *Bilva* roots should be used for cleansing and filling up and to encourage healing of wound.³⁴

5.3.6. Decoction of roots to increase longevity

*bilvasya cūrṇaṃ puṣye tu hutam vārān sahasraśaḥ
śrisūktena naraḥ kalye sasuvārṇaṃ dine dine
sarpimadhuyutaṃ lihyādalakṣmīnāśanaṃ param
tvacaṃ vihāya bilvasya mūlakvāthaṃ dine dine
prāśnīyāt payasā sārḍhaṃ snātvā hutvā samāhitāḥ
daśasāhasramāyusyaṃ smṛtaṃ yuktarathaṃ bhavet*

The powder of *Bilva* taken in *Puṣya Nakṣatra* should be potentiated a thousand times with *Śrisūkta* and should then be mixed with gold, *ghṛta*, and honey and licked every morning. This is good remedy to remove all types of inauspiciousness. The decoction of the *Bilva* root, from which the skin has already been removed, should be taken daily with after taking bath and doing the oblations. If taken after ten thousand times potentiation it would increase the span of life and it is called *yuktaratha rasāyana*.³⁶

5.3.7. Compound for sudation therapy:

*bilvairañḍārkavarṣābhūdadhithonmattaśigrubhiḥ
bastagandhāśvagandhābhyāṃ tarkārīyavaveṇubhiḥ
aranālaśṛtairebhirnāḍīśvedāḥ prayojitāḥ
kaphavātasamutthānaṃ karṇaśūlaṃ nirasyati*

(SS. *Utta*. 21. 6-7)

A compound consisting of *kuṭannāṭa*, *āspḥoṭa*, *phañijhaka*, *bilva*, *pattūra*, *pilu*, *arka* and *kapittha* may be employed for sudation therapy.³⁶ *Bilva*, *erañḍa*, *arka*, *punarnavā*, *kapittha*, *dhatūrā*, *śigrū*, *bastagandha*, *aśvagandhā*, *arañī* and *yava*- all these drugs should be boiled with sour gruel and used for the purposes of *nāḍīśveda*. It completely cures the *karṇaśūla* originating due to *kapha* and *vāta*.³⁷

5.3.8. Decoction to rectify hearing disorder:

*gavāṃ mūtreṇa bilvāni piṣṭvā tailaṃ vipācayet
sajalaṃ casadugdhaṃ ca bādhirye karṇapūraṇam*

(SS. *Utta*. 21.35-36)

The oil processed with *Bilva* pasted in cow's urine, milk and water is indicated for filling the ear in a case of *bādhirya*.³⁸

5.3.9. Decoction for detoxication:

*bilvaḥ śirīṣo golomī surasādiśca yo gaṇaḥ
pariṣeke prayoktavyaḥ skandāpasmāraśāntaye*

(SS. *Utta*. 29. 3)

For the pacification of the *skandāpasmāra* affliction, decoction of *Bilva*, *śirīṣa*, *golomī* and the group of drugs belonging to *surasādigaṇa* should be used for sprinkling purposes.³⁹

*kapitthaṃ suvahāṃ bimbīṃ thatā bilvaṃ pracībalam
nandīṃ bhallātakaṃ cāpi pariṣeke prayojayet*

(SS. *Utta.* 34. 3)

For removing *śitapūtanā grah* affliction the decoction of *kapittha*, *suvahā*, *bimbī*, *bilva*, *pracibālā*, *nandi* and *bhallātaka* should be used for sprinkling over the child.⁴⁰

*bilvāgnimanthapūkāḥ kāryāḥ syuḥ pariṣecane
surā sabījaṃ dhānyāmlaṃ pariṣekeca śasyate*

(SS. *Utta.* 36.3)

The body of the child should be sprinkled over with the decoction of *bilva*, *agnimanthā* and *pūtikā*, *surā* with fermenting enzymes and with *dhānyāmla* for managing *naigameṣagrah*.⁴¹

5.3.10. Decoction for curing fever:

*vṛścīvabilvavarṣābhvaḥ payaścodakamevaca
pacet kṣīrāvaśiṣṭaṃ tutaddhi sarvajvarāpaham*

(SS. *Utta.* 39.202-203)

Vṛścīva, *bilva* and *varṣābhū* should be boiled with milk and water till milk only remains; this decoction cures all types of fever.⁴²

5.3.11. Decoction for curing diarrhoea:

*bilvaśakrayavāmbhodabālakātiviṣākṛtaḥ
kaṣāyo hantyaṭī sāraṃ sāmaṃ pittasamudbhavam
madhukotpalabilvābdahriberośī ranāgaraiḥ
kṛtaḥ kvātho madhuyutaḥ pittāṭī sāranāśanaḥ*

(SS. *Utta.* 40.66-67)

The decoction prepared from *bilva*, *śakrayava*, *ambhoda*, *vālaka* and *ativiṣa* cures the diarrhoea caused by *āma* and *pitta*. The decoction prepared from *madhuka*, *utpala*, *bilva*, *abda*, *hribera*, *uśīra* and *nāgara*, taken with honey cures the diarrhoea of *pittaja* type.⁴³

*dārvi bilvakaṇādrākṣākaṭukendrayavairghṛtam
sādhitaṃ hantyaṭī sāraṃ vātapittkaphātmakam*

(SS. *Utta.* 40.77-78)

Medicated *ghṛta* processed with *dārvi*, *bilva*, *kaṇa*, *drākṣā*, *ka-uka* and *indrayava* cures the diarrhoea caused by simultaneous vitiation of *vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha*.⁴⁴

*pr̥ṣṇaparṇī balā bilvavālakotpaladhānyakaiḥ
sanāgaraiḥ pibet peyāṃ sādhitāmudarāmayī*

(SS. Utta. 40. 91)

The patient suffering from the abdominal disease diarrhoea should be given the curative drink prepared from *pr̥ṣṇiparṇī*, *balā*, *bilva*, *bālaka*, *utpala* and *dhānyaka* along with *nāgara*.⁴⁵

*drave saraktesravati bāla bilvaṃ saphāṇitam
sakṣaudratailaṃ prāgeva lihyādāśu hitaṃ hi tat*

(SS. Utta. 40. 95) (SS. Utta. 40.125)

Madhuka and pulp of *bilva* when taken with sugar and honey cure diarrhoea.⁴⁶ When the patient has loose motions with blood, he should lick unripe *bilva* with treacle, honey and oil, before meals, to get instant relief.⁴⁷

*bilvamadhyam samadhukam śarkarākṣaudrasaṃyutam
taṇḍulāmbuyuto yoga pittraktotthitam jayet*

(SS. Utta. 40.127)

The recipe of *bilva* pulp with *madhuka* and mixed with sugar and honey taken with rice water cures diarrhoea due to *pittarakta*.⁴⁸

5.3.12. Unripe fruit paste for stomach infections:

svinnāni piṣṭvadāpi samaṃ bilvaśalātubhiḥ

(SS. Utta. 40. 133)

The patient whose digestive power is active and who passes frothy stools without much faecal content should take boiled unripe *bilva* in form of paste.⁴⁹

*biḍaṃ bilvaśalātūni nāgaraṃ cāmlapeṣitam
dadhnaḥ saraśca yamake bhṛṣṭo varcaḥkṣaye hitaḥ*

(SS. Utta. 40.136-137)

Biḍa, unripe *bilva* fruits and *nāgara* pasted in *amla* and fried in *yamaka* with the scum of yoghurt is beneficial in curing diarrhoea when the faecal contents are minimal.⁵⁰

5.3.13. Decoction of roots for *kaphaja* thirst: Water, processed with *bilva*, *āḍhaki*, smaller five root group of drugs and *darbha* relieves the *kaphaja* thirst.⁵¹

5.4. Caraka Saṃhitā

5.4.1. Fruits as cure for constipation on digestion:

*dadhitthabilvacāṅgerī takradāḍimasādhitā
pācanī grāhiṇī-----*

(CS. Su. 2.19)

Bilva is used for non-unctuous enema in *udāvarta* and constipation.⁵² The gruel prepared with *kappitha*, *bilva*, *cāṅgerī*, buttermilk and pomegranates is digestive and astringent.⁵³

5.4.2. Leaves and fruits to pacify varieties of disorders:

bilvaṃ tudurjaraṃ pakvaṃ doṣalaṃ pūtimārutam
snigdhoṣṇatī kṣṇaṃ tadbālaṃ dīpanaṃ kaphavātajit
 (CS.Su. 17.138)

Bilva is anti-haemorrhoidal.⁵⁴ *Bilva* is sub-corrective enemata. It is also sub-unctuous enemata.⁵⁵ *Bilva* is antipyretics.⁵⁶ *Bilva* leaves alleviate *kapha*-*'Bilvapatraṃ tu vātanut'*.⁵⁷ *Bilva*, when ripe is digested with difficulty, causes *doṣas* and flatus with foul smell. The same when young, is unctuous, hot, sharp, appetiser and alleviate *kapha* and *vāta*.⁵⁸

5.4.3. Decoction to cure pain and fever:

pibet sabilvāṃ peyaṃ vā jvaresaparikartike
balāvṛkṣāmlakolāmlakalaśī dhāvanī śṛtām
 (CS.Ci. 2.186-187)

In fever associated with cutting pain in abdomen one should take the liquid gruel with *bilva* and cooked with *balām vṛkṣāmla*, *kolāmla*, *pṛṣniparṇī* and *kaṅṭakārī*.⁵⁹

5.4.4. Cure for chronic fever:

pārśvasūlamupastambhaṃ hṛdgrahaṃ cāpi mārutaḥ
janayedasya taṃ tailaṃ bilvakṣāreṇa pāyayet
 (CS.Ci. 13.169-170)

By taking milk boiled with tender fruits of *bilva* one suffering from fever becomes free from cough, headache, pain in sides and chronic fever.⁶⁰ If *Vāyu* produces pain in sides, stiffness and constriction in cardiac region, the patient should be advised to take oil with the alkali of *bilva*.⁶¹

5.4.5. Decoction to cure pile:

srabdhāni svedayet pūrvaṃ śophaśūlānvitāni ca
citrakaṣārabilvānāṃ tailābhyajya buddhimān
 (CS. Ci.14.39-40)

The piles which are stiff and associated with swelling and pain should, at first, be fomented after having been inducted with the oil prepared with *citraka*, alkali and *bilva*.⁶²

5.4.6. Cure for piles:

*pāṭhā vatsabījaṃ rasāñjanam nāgaram yavānyaśca
bilvamiti cārśasaiścūrṇitāni peyāni śūleṣu*

(CS. Ci. 14. 195)

In case the patient is suffering from swelling and pain in ano-rectum and poor digestion, one should administer saturating buttermilk added with *kapittha* and *bilva* or *bilva* and *śuñṭhī*.⁶³ *Pāṭhā* combined with *bilva* alleviates the painful piles.⁶⁴ In case there is pain in piles, the powder of *pāṭhā*, *indrayava*, *śuñṭhī* and *bilva* should be taken.⁶⁵

5.4.7. Cure for jaundice:

*kalkaḥ syādvālabilvānām tilakalkaśca tatsamaḥ
dadhnaḥ saroamlasnehādhyah khaḍo hanyāt pravāhikām*

(CS. Ci. 19.34)

If the patient passes stool with *āma* and pain, he should take the paste of *bilva*, *citraka* and *śuñṭhī* added with *biḍa* salt.⁶⁶ One should take *āragvadha* with the juice of sugarcane, *vidāri* or *śmalaka* or the juice of *bilva* leaves with *trikaṭu* to alleviate jaundice.⁶⁷ The *khaḍa* prepared of the paste of tender *bilva* fruits and equal quantity of sésamum paste, supernatant layer of curd and added with sours and fat destroys *pravāhikā* (dysentery).⁶⁸

5.4.8. Cure for heart disease:

*punarnavām dāru sapañcamūlam rāsnām yavān Bilvakulthakolaṃ
paktvā jaletena vipācya tailamabhyañgapāneanilahṛdgadagham*

(CS. Ci. 26.75)

When the patient is free from *āma* and suffers from prolapsed of rectum with pain, the unctuous enema should be prepared of *daśmūla* and *bilva* fruits should be administered.⁶⁹ *Punarnavā*, *devadāru*, *pañcamūla*, *rāsnā*, barley grains, *bilva*, *kulattha* and *kola* should be decocted in water. Oil prepared with this decoction and used as massage and intake alleviates *vātika* hṛdroga.⁷⁰

5.4.9. Cure for *vātika* disorder:

*śatāhvāvabilvāmlaiḥ siddham tailam samīraṇe
saindhavenāgnitaptaena taptenatapataṃ cānilanuddhṛtam*

(CS. Sidd. 4.8)

Oil cooked with *śatāhvā*, barley, *bilva* and sour substances is used in *vātika* disorders⁷¹.

5.5. Vāgbhata's Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdayam

5.5.1. Treatment for humoural disorder:

*pakvaṃ sudurjaraṃ bilvaṃ doṣalaṃ pūtimārutam
dīpanaṃ kaphavātaghnaṃ bālaṃ grāhyubhayaṃ ca tat*
(AH.Su. 6.125-126)

Bilva fruit when ripe is hard to digest, aggravates the *doṣās* and causes foul smell in the flatus; unripe fruit kindles digestion, mitigates *vāta* and *kapha*; both are water absorbent.⁷²

5.5.2. Treatment for humoral disorder:

*bilvakāśmaryatakārriṃ pāṭalāṭiṅṭukairmahat
jayetkaśāyatikoṣṇaṃ pañcamūlaṃ kaphānilau*
(AH. Su. 6. 167-168)

Bilva, *kāśmarya*, *tarkārī*, *pāṭalā* and *ṭiṅṭuka* are together known as *mahat pañcamūla*. It is astringent and bitter in taste, hot in potency and mitigate *kapha* and *vāta*.⁷³

5.5.3. Treatment for abdominal abscess:

*varuṇasairyakayugmaśatāvarī dahanamoraṭa bilvaviṣāṇikā
dvibr̥hatī dvikarañjayādvayaṃ bahalapallavadarbharujākaraḥ
varuṇādih̥ kaphaṃ medo mandāgnitvaṃ niyacchati
ādhyavātaṃ śiraḥśūlaṃ gulmaṃ cāntaḥ savidrādhim*
(AH. Su. 15. 21-22)

Bilva along with *varuṇa*, the two *sairyaka*, *śatāvarī*, *dahana*, *morāṭa*, *viṣāṇikā*, the two *br̥hatī*, the two *karañja*, the two *jaya*, *bahalapallava*, *darbha* and *rujākara* fall in *Varuṇādi* group. This group subjugates *kapha*, fat dyspepsia, cures *ādhyavāta* (rigidity of the thighs), headaches, tumpors and abscess inside the abdomen.⁷⁴

5.5.4. Treatment for smooth delivery:

*kapittha bilvabr̥hatī paṭoleḥsunidigdhkāta
mūlaiḥ śṛtaṃ prayuñjīta kṣīraṃ māse thatāṣṭame*
(AH. Sarir. 2. 58-59)

Bilva also falls in 'Priyaṅguambaṣṭhādi gaṇa'. Plants of this *gaṇa* are useful in curing chronic diarrhoea, fractures, *pitta doṣa* and even ulcers.⁷⁵ *Bilva* is important ingredient for mild kind of smoke used for treating various diseases.⁷⁶ During the eighth month of pregnancy, milk boiled

with roots of *bilva*, *kapittha*, *bṛhatī*, *paṭola*, *ikṣu* and *nidigdika* should be administered for smooth delivery.⁷⁷

5.5.5. Treatment for fever and diarrhoea:

*kāsācchvāsācchiraḥśūlāccirajvarāt
mucyate jvaritaḥ pītvā pañcamūlī śṛtaṃ payah
śṛtametaṇḍamūlena bālabilvena vā jvarāt*

(AH. Ci. 1.111-112)

When fever and diarrhoea are present together then *bilva*, *nāgara*, *utpala*, *dhānyaka* added with little of sour, should be consumed. This combination acts as *dīpana* (improves hunger) and *pācana* (cooks the undigested materials).⁷⁸ The patient of fever gets relieved of cough, dyspnoea, headache, pain in the flanks and chronic fever by drinking milk boiled with *pañcamūla*, by drinking milk boiled either with roots of *eraṇḍa* or tender fruits of *bilva*.⁷⁹

5.5.6. Treatment for heart problem:

*bilvaṃ rāsnāṃ yavān kolaṃ devadāruṃ punarnavām
kulatthān pañcamūlaṃ ca paktvā tasmīnpacejjale
tailaṃ tannāvane pāne vastauca viniyojayet*

(AH. Ci. 6.27-28)

Bilva, *rāsnā*, *yava*, *kola*, *devdāru*, *punarnavā*, *kulattha* and drugs of *pañcmūla* should be boiled in water and decoction prepared. Medicated oil prepared by using this decoction should be used for nasal medication, drinking and enema. This is useful in treatment of heart diseases.⁸⁰

5.5.7. Treatment for piles:

*āthāprayojoyadāhasya nirgatān kaphavātajanān
sastambhakaṇḍūrukśophānabhyajya gudkī lakān
bilvamūlāgnikakṣārakuṣṭhaiḥ siddhena secayet*

(AH. Ci. 8.14-15)

Those pile masses, which are unsuitable for cauterization, which are protruding, painful and swollen should be bathed by pouring the oil boiled with root of *bilva*, *agnikā*, *kṣāra* and *kuṣṭha*.⁸¹

5.5.8. Decoction for duodenal disease:

*pāṭhājāmodadhnikāśvadamṣṭrapañcakolakaiḥ
sabilvairdadhni cāṅgerīsvase ca caturguṇe
hantyaḥjyaṃ siddhmānāhaṃ mūtrakṛchraṃ pravāhikām
gudabhraṃśārtigudajagrahaṇī gadamārutān*

(AH. Ci. 8.77-78)

Medicated ghee prepared with decoction of *pāṭhā*, *ajmodā*, *dhanikā*, *śvadamṣṭrā*, *pañcōla* and *bilva* added with four parts of *dadhi* and juice of *cāñgerī* cures flatulence, dysuria, dysentery, prolapse of the rectum and pain, haemorrhoids, duodenal disease and *maruta* (increase of *vāta*).⁸²

5.5.9. Treatment for piles and allied diseases:

*pippaliṃ madanaṃ bilvaṃ śatāhvāṃ madhukaṃ vacāṃ
kuṣṭhaṃ śaṭhīṃ puṣkarākhyam citrakam devadāru ca
pistvā tailaṃ vipaktavyaṃ dviguṇakṣīrasaṃyutam
arśasāṃ mūdhvātānāṃ tacchreṣṭhmanuvāsanam
gudaniāsaranaṃ sūlaṃ mūtrakrcchraṃ pravāhikām
katyūruprṣṭhdaurbalyamānāhaṃ vañkṣaṇāśrayam
picchāsrāvaṃ gude śophaṃ vātavarchovinigraham
utthānaṃ bahuśoyacca jayettcānuvāsanāt*

(AH. Ci. 8.89-93)

Medicated oil should be prepared with the paste of *pippalī*, *madana*, *bilva*, *śatāhva*, *madhuka*, *vacā*, *kuṣṭha*, *śaṭhī*, *puṣkarākhyam*, *citraka* and two parts of milk. The oil is best for oil enema, therapy piles, inactivity of *vāta*, prolapse of the rectum, pain of the abdomen, dysuria, dysentery, weakness of the waist, highs and back, abdominal distention localized in the groins, slimy discharge from rectum, swelling of rectum, obstruction of flatus and faeces and frequent elimination of faeces get cured by this oil used for oil-enema therapy.⁸³

5.5.10. Cure for diarrhoea:

*bilvamustākṣibhaiṣjyadhātakī puṣpanāgaraiḥ
pakvātī sārajittakre yavāgūrdādhikī thatā*

(AH. Ci. 9.23)

Yavāgū (gruel) prepared with *dadhi* or taken processed with *bilva*, *musta*, *akṣibhaiṣajya* (*rodhra*), *dhātakī puṣpa* and *nāgara* cures *pakvātisāra* (diarrhoea in which the *doṣas* have been ripened / transformed by heat / decreased).⁸⁴

5.5.11. Cure for dysentery:

*kalko bilvaśalāṭunāṃ tilakalkaścatatsamaḥ
dadhnaḥ saroamlaḥ sasnehaḥ khalo hanta pravāhikām*

(AH. Ci. 9.25)

Kalko (buttermilk boiled with spices) added with paste of *bilva śalāṭu* (tender fruits) and equal quantity of paste of *tila*, mixed with water of *dadhi* (curd) which is sour and fat (oil or gruel) cures *pravāhikā* (dysentery).⁸⁵

5.5.12. Treatment for gastrial pain:

bālabilvaṃ guḍaṃ tailaṃ pippaiṃ viśvabheṣajaṃ
lihyādvāte pratihatesāsūlaḥ sapravāhikaḥ

(AH. Ci. 9.35-36)

In case of obstruction of *vāta* (flatus) associated with pain and straining at stools (tenesmus) the patient should lick the paste of *bālabilva*, *guḍa*, *taila*, *pippai* and *viśvabheṣaja*.⁸⁶

5.5.13. Treatment for abdominal pain:

samsargyā kriyamāṇāyāṃ śūlaṃ yadyanuvartate
srutadoṣasya taṃ śīghraṃ yathāvahnayanuvāsayet
śatapušpāvariḥ bhyāṃ ca bilvena madhukena ca
tailapādaṃ payoyuktaṃ pakvamanvāsanaṃ ghṛtam

(AH. Ci. 9.70-72)

During the course of *samsargikṛya* (regimen of liquid foods) if pain in the abdomen persists, due to over-elimination of the *doṣas*, then the patient should be given *anuvāsana* (oil-enema therapy) depending on the strength of the digestive fire. Medicated ghee prepared with *śatapušpā*, *vari*, *bilva* and *madhuka*, *taila* one-quarter, along with milk is best for *anuvāsana*.⁸⁷

5.5.14. Treatment for pain in heart region:

pārśvaśūlamupastambhaṃ hṛdgṛahaṃ casamīraṇaḥ
yadi kuryāt tatastailaṃ bilvakṣārānviṭaṃ pibet

(AH. Ci. 15.45)

When *samīraṇa* (*vāta*) has given rise to pain in flanks, slight rigidity and catching pain in the region of the heart, then oil of sesame mixed with *kṣāra* (ash) of *bilva* should be consumed.⁸⁸

5.5.15. Treatment for gas in the heart:

balābilvaśṛte kṣīre ghṛītamāṇḍaṃ vipācayet
tasya śuktiḥprakuñco vā nasyaṃ vāte śirogate

(AH. Ci. 21.62)

Balā and *bilva* are boiled in milk and scum of the ghee is added to it and cooked again. This ghee, used as *nasya* (nasal medication) in prescribed doses is ideal for curing diseases of *vāta* affecting head.⁸⁹

5.5.16. Treatment of *ślesmā*:

sitairanḍajaṭāsiṃhī phaladāruvacānataiḥ

ghoṣayā bilvamūlaiścatailaṃ pakvaṃ payonvitam

nasyaṃ sarvodhrvajatrutthavātaśleṣmāmayārtijit

(AH. Utr. 13.54-55)

Medicated oil prepared with the decoction and paste of roots of white *eraṇḍa*, fruits of *bṛhatī*, *dāru*, *vacā*, *ghoṣa* and roots of *bilva* added with milk; used as nasal drops, cures all the diseases of organs above the shoulders caused by *vātaśleṣma*.⁹⁰

5.6. *Cakradattah*

5.6.1. Dried pulp cure from dysentery:

guḍena khādayedvilvaṃ raktātisāranāśanam

āmaśūlavibandhghnaṃ kuṣīrī gavināśanam

The dried pulp of the fruit is given with treacle, in recent dysentery with gripping, pain in the loins and costiveness.⁹¹

5.6.2. Root for diarrhoea in infants:

bilvamūlakaṣāyena lājāyaiva saśarkarāḥ

ālodya pāyayedbālaṃ chrdyatī sāranāśanam

A decoction of the root of *bilva* is given with sugar and fried rice, for checking diarrhoea and gastric irritability in infants.⁹²

5.6.3. Leaves extract for treatment of jaundice:

bilvapatrarasaṃ pūtaṃ soṣaṇaṃ svayathau

viṣaṃgecaiva durnāmi vidadyāt kāmālāmapī

The fresh juice of the leaves is given, with the addition of black pepper, in *anasarca* with costiveness and jaundice.⁹³

5.6.4. Treatment for external inflammations: In external inflammations, the juice of the leaves is given internally, to remove the supposed derangement of the humours.⁹⁴

5.7. Vṛndamādhava

5.7.1. Treatment of *rakta āma*:

guḍena khādayed bilvaṃ raktāṭī sārānāśanam
āmaśūlavibandhaghnaṃ kukṣirogavināśanam

(VM. 3.40)

Intake of *bilva* with jaggery checks diarrhoea with blood, removes pain due to *āma* and constipation and alleviates disorders of bowels.⁹⁵

5.7.2. Treatment of gastric pain:

bāla bilvaṃ guḍaṃ tailaṃ pippalī viśvabheṣajam
lihyād vāte pratihatesasūle sapravāhike

(VM. 3.66)

Tender fruits of *bilva*, jaggery, oil *papalī* and *śuṅṭhī*-all these together should be taken in condition of obstructed *vāta*, pain and tenesmus.⁹⁶

5.7.3. Treatment of vomiting in diarrhoea:

bilvacūtāsthiniryuhaḥ pītaḥśakṣaudraśarkaraḥ
nihanyācchardyaṭī sārāṃ vaiśvānara ivāhutim

(VM. 3.30)

Decoction of *bilva* and *āmra* (seed) mixed with honey and sugar checks vomiting and diarrhoea.⁹⁷

5.7.4. Treatment of *grahṇiroga*:

śriphalaśalāṭukalko nāgarcūrṇena miśritaḥ saguḍaḥ
grahaṇī gadamatyugraṇṇaṃ takrabhujā śīlito jayati

(VM. 4.10)

Paste of the tender fruit of *bilva* mixed with *śuṅṭhī* powder and jaggery alleviates severe *grahṇiroga* if the patient is kept on the diet of butter milk.⁹⁸

5.7.5. Treatment of constipation, piles and jaundice:

bilvapatrarasṃ pūtaṃ soṣaṇaṃ śvayathau trije
viṣaṃge caiva durnāmnī vidadhyāt kāmālāsu ca

(VM. 39.8)

Juice of *bilva* leaves mixed with *marica* is useful in oedema caused by three *doṣas*, constipation, piles and jaundice.⁹⁹

5.7.6. Treatment of foul odour of the body:

bilvapatraraso vāpi gātradaurgandhyanāśanaḥ

Juice of *bilva* leaves removes foul odour of the body.¹⁰⁰

(VM. 61.45-46)

5.7.7. Treatment of eye diseases:

bilvapatrarasaḥpūtaḥ sājyasindhukaṇānvitaḥ

śulve varāṭikāghṛṣṭo dhūpito gomayāgninā

payasāloḍṭaścākṣṇoḥ pūraṇācchophaśūlanut

abhiṣyandeadhimanthea srāve rakteca śasyate

Juice of *bilva* leaves is strained and added with ghee, rocksalt and *pippalī*, then it is rubbed with a cowrie in a copper vessel, fumigated with cow-dung fire and dissolved in milk. Filling eyes with this removes inflammation and pain is useful in conjunctivitis, glaucoma, lachrymation and congestion.¹⁰¹

5.8. *Rājanighanṭuḥ*

5.8.1. Care for humoral disorder: As per *Rājanighanṭuḥ*, *bilva* is astringent and bitter in taste, pungent in the post digestive effect and has potency. It alleviates *kapha* and *vāta doṣas*, but aggravates the *pitta doṣa*. It has astringent, anti-diarrhoeal, appetiser and digestant properties. The raw fruit is appetiser, digestant and an astringent, whereas the ripened fruit is astringent, sweet but mild laxative in properties. The ripen fruit is heavy to digest and in large doses, it causes flatulence and abates peristalsis. *Bilva* possesses dry and light attributes.¹⁰²

5.9. *Sodhala Nighanṭuḥ***5.9.1. Treatment of intestinal disorder:**

bilvamūlaṃ maruśleṣmacharddighnaṃ na ca pittkṛt

bilvaṃ gurvagnisādeagrayaṃ doṣalaṃ pūtimārutam

pakvaṃ bālaṃ puastīkṣṇam pittalaṃ laghu dīpanam

vātaśleṣmaghnamuṣṇam casnigdham grāhyubhayaṃ

tatpatraṃ kaphapittābhaśūlaghnaṃ grāhi rocanam

(SN. *Rasa-Vitrya*.149)

Bilva mūla (root) mitigates *vāta* and *kapha*. It checks *chardi* (vomiting). It does not aggravate *pitta*. *Bilva* in genral is *guru* (heavy and uneasily digestible); it subsidies gastric power (*agnisāda*). It aggravates *doṣas* and is *pūtimāsuta*. *Pakva* and *bāla* is *tikṣṇa*, *laghu* and *dīpana*, it is *pittala*, it mitigates *vāta* and *kapha*; it is *uṣṇa*, *snigdha* (unctuous) and *grāhī* (water absorbent). *Bilva patra* mitigates *kapha*, *pitta* and *āma*; it cures *śūla*. It is *grāhī* and *rocana*.¹⁰³

6. CONCLUSION

Various references in Sanskrit Literature show the importance of *bilva* in Vedic times and in modern era too. A plant with great medicinal values, it has drawn the attention of spiritual leaders from time immemorial. It is held in high esteem in Indian Tradition due to its divine origin and association with numbers of Gods and Goddesses like *Lakṣmī*, *Prajāpati*, *Sūrya*, Lord *Śiva*, and *Pāravati*. It is considered so sacred that one who uses *Bilva* tree in worship is thought to be blessed to visit all the sacred places. Injuring or felling the *bilva* tree is strictly prohibited and plantation of this tree is highly recommended. The leaves of the *bilva* are trifoliolate symbolizing the 'Trimūrties'-*Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu*, and *Śiva*. *Yajña* is considered to be part of Indian Tradition and *bilva* is one of the the *yajñiya* plants. Number of rituals like marriage ceremony, *snātaka karma*, sacred thread ceremony and *samāvartan saṃskāra* are related to *bilva*. Various *vratas* associated with *bilva* are *Bilvatrirātrivrata*, *Bilvalakṣavrata*, *Bilvaṭākhāpūjā*, and *Śrīvrkṣanavamivrata*. Hence, there would be no exaggeration in concluding that this tree is accepted as most sacred for its high medicinal and spiritual values.

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