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Ethnomedicinal uses of Sthalavrikshas of Erode district, Tamil Nadu, India

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Abstract

The survey of sthalavriksha of temples was conducted in Erode district of Tamil Nadu, India from the month November 2017 to March 2018. A total number of 52 temples surveyed which includes 28 Shiva temples, 8 Perumal temples, 7 Amman temples, 7 Murugan temples and two other deity temples. Out of 52 temples surveyed, Sthalavrikshas found in 47 temples. A total of 25 plant species of sthalavriksha belonging to 14 families, belong to 25 genera were recorded. All the recorded 25 Sthalavrikshas species belong to angiosperms and are dicotyledons. Among 14 families, Caesalpiniaceae is the most dominant family represented by 3 species followed by Rutaceae and Moraceae represented 2 species each. Among the 25 species, *Aegle marmelos* was the most frequently recorded in temples followed by *Prosopis spicigera*, *Ficus religiosa* and *Azadirachta indica*. The medicinal uses of the sthalavriksha have gathered from the available literature, priests and temple authorities. All 18 plant species of sthalavrikshas have medicinal values. Different parts of the sthalavriksha are used for medicinal purpose. The entire plant (2 species), bark (9 species), fruits (4 species), leaves (8 species), flower (3 species), gum and seed (2 species) and root (1 species) are used for medicinal purpose.

Keywords: sthalavrikshas, temples, caesalpiniaceae, *Aegle marmelos* and medicinal uses

1. Introduction

Worship of plants is practiced throughout the world and is well established from pre-historic in India. Plant worshipping practice was varied depending on their geographical distribution Figs (*Ficus benghalensis* and *Ficus religiosa*) in India, Baobabs (*Adansonia digitata*) in Africa, Olives and Oaks (*Quercus sp.*) in Europe, Palm (*Phoenix sylvestris*) in Egypt and Middle East. Plant worship can be classified as sacred groves, deity beneath a single tree and sthalavrikshas. Sacred groves one of the traditional conservation practices followed by the tribes. Sacred groves are sanctified forests associate with temples and represent local traditions of conservation and management of natural resources. Deity beneath a single tree is common throughout India and other Eastern countries where anthropomorphic worship is followed. It is an intermediate stage in the evolution of plant worship. Here the deity is installed beneath a tree and plant is not given much importance, it plays only a minor role as a shelter of the deities. Sthalavrikshas or sacred temple trees are found all over India. In Tamil Nadu, almost every temple is associated with a plant or tree connected to the history and mythology of the temple and or deity. The Sanskrit term "Sthalavriksha" means tree of the locality (sthal - place; vriksha-tree). The worshipper who comes to the temple attains a healthy spiritual enlighten. Sthalavriksha is a natural tree found in the temple site before construction of the temple.

Sthalavriksha is single plant mostly in the form of a tree or in some areas obtained as herb, shrub, grass or climber. After the construction of temples, these plants are treated as sthalavriksha or temple tree (sacred plants). Due to traditional beliefs, both the devotees and temple authorities serve as protectors of the sthalavriksha in temples. Sthalavrikshas are generally associated with Shiva, Vishnu, Murugan and sometimes with goddess Sakthi. Sthalavrikshas are utilized by devotees for their religious and medicinal values and are also important germplasm reserve. For instance two threatened species *Saraca asoca* and *Santalum album* are worshipped as sthalavriksha. These species are becoming rare in the wild and are included in the Red listed plants of Southern India (Gunasekaran and Balasubramanian, 2012) [2].

The devotees and local traditional medical practitioners use several sthalavriksha plants for treating various ailments. The sthalavrikshas have played a vital role in the well-being of humanity. The devotees visit sthalavrikshas tie their yellow ropes, cradle pray for their health and virgin women's for their quick marriage. Similarly, women often collect the withering local beliefs (Gunasekaran and Balasubramanian 2012) [2],

Few vrikshas are worshipped to be free of illness and disease. There are number of shrines with the name of sthalavriksha namely Gooseberry (*Phyllanthus emblica*, Nelli) at Thirunellikaval - Thiruvapur District, Jasmine (*Jasminum auriculatum*, Mullai) at Thirumullaivasal – Nagapattinam District, the palmyrah (*Borassus flabellifer*, Panai) at Thiruppanaiyur- Thiruvapur District, Blinding tree (*Excoecaria agallocha*, Thillai) at Chidambaram-Cuddalore District and Arjuna (*Terminalia arjuna*, Maruthamaram) at Maruthamalai – Coimbatore District. The present study area belongs to Kongu region with rich traditional belief and heritage.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study area

The survey of sthalavriksha was conducted in Erode district of Tamil Nadu, India. It is divided into two revenue divisions namely Erode and Gobichettipalayam and further subdivided into 10 taluks. The geographical area of the Erode district is landlocked and is situated at between 1036” and 1158” north latitude and between 7649” and 7758” east longitude. The district forms the meeting point of Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats separated by River Bhavani.

2.2 Climate of the study area

The climate is mostly dry and characterized by good rainfall. Unlike nearby Coimbatore District, Erode District has dry weather throughout the year except during the monsoons. The Palghat Gap in Western Ghats, which has a moderating effect on the climate of Coimbatore district, does not help in bringing down the dry climate in the area. The highest temperatures are normally recorded during May.

2.3 Study period

Temples were frequently visited and surveyed for the sthalavrikshas from the month of November 2017 to March 2018.

2.4 Taxonomic identification

Sthalavrikshas were collected, photographed and characters were noted for the identification purpose. Plants were identified by Flora of the Presidency Madras (Gamble, 1986)^[1] and Flora of the Carnatic Tamil Nadu (Mathew, 1983)^[4].

2.5 Sthalavriksha and its associated plants

Documentation of the associated plants of the sthalavriksha was recorded during observation.

2.6 Medicinal properties

The medicinal value information of the sthalavriksha has collected from the available literature (Warrier *et al.*, 1995)^[9].

2.7 Phenology of sthalavriksha

The phenology of sthalavrikshas was documented by interviewing the priest and direct observation of plants (Singh and Kushwaha, 2005)^[7].

2.8 Age of Sthalavriksha

There are several features of a tree that can be measured. Height and crown spread are perhaps the most apparent. Thickness of the stem is a constant non-reversible feature of tree growth in so far as it has to increase each year that the trees lives. By good fortune stem girth is easy to measure and consequently it can be recorded with great precision. Provided

there are no branches, swellings, buttresses or abnormal lumps, girth should be measured with a tape at breast height (1.3m or 4ft 3 inch above ground level). Girth is the single parameter which sums the infinite number of diameters in an irregular cross-section. Diameter at breadth height (dbh) is the measurement on which the estimation of age suggested here depends. Conversion of girth measured in centimetres to diameters is achieved by dividing girth by π (Mitchell *et al.*, 1994).

2.9 Conservation status

Threatened status of Sthalavrikshas was determined based on the red data book of Indian plants (IUCN redlist.org.2014).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Enumeration of Sthalavrikshas

A total number of 52 temples surveyed which includes 28 Shiva temples, 8 Perumal temples, 7 Amman temples, 7 Murugan temples and two other deity temples. Out of 52 temples surveyed, sthalavrikshas found in 47 temples. A total of 25 plant species of sthalavriksha belonging to 14 families and 18 genera were recorded (Table – 1).

All the recorded 25 sthalavrikshas species belong to angiosperms and are dicotyledons. Among 14 families recorded, Caesalpiniaceae is the most dominant family represented by 3 species followed by Rutaceae and Moraceae represented 2 species each. Among the 18 species, *Aegle marmelos* was the most frequently recorded in temples followed by *Prosopis spicigera*, *Ficus religiosa* and *Azadirachta indica*.

The study of sthalavriksha research works have been conducted in field was scanty. Gunasekaran and Balasubramanian (2012)^[2] recorded 112 plant species including their medicinal uses from 820 temples in Tamil Nadu, Southern India.

3.2 Medicinal uses

Most of the sthalavrikshas are said to contain medicinal properties. Among the 18 plant species, all are reported medicinal values. Different parts of the sthalavriksha are used as medicine value. Among the sthalavriksha, the entire plant (2 species), bark (9 species), fruits (4 species), leaves (8 species), flower (3 species), gum and seed (2 species) and root (1 species) contained medicinal properties. The medicinal properties of the sthalavrikshas are presented in Table 2.

Aegle marmelos fruits with mucilage and pectin content is very useful for treating chronic diarrhoea, dysentery, haemorrhoids and swellings. The leaf juice of *Aegle marmelos* is mixed with black pepper is used to treat jaundice. *Aegle marmelos* leaf, fruits and root help in curing asthma and fever. The bark and root of the *Aegle marmelos* are soaked in water overnight in a copper vessel used to cure blood pressure and diabetes (Venkatesan *et al.*, 2009)^[8].

Azadirachta indica bark is used as astringent and leprosy. The leaves of the *Azadirachta indica* are used as antiseptic and cure measles. The flowers of the *Azadirachta indica* are used to treatment of liver diseases, the fruits are used to cure cut wounds and the roots are used as antitode. Seeds of the *Azadirachta indica* are used to skin diseases and the oil extracted from seed is applied as an antiseptic dressing in leprosy, scabies and ringworm.

The fruit of the *Embllica officinalis* is used to reduce high pressure and anti-ageing. *Prosopis spicigera* bark is used to cure toothache, leaves are used to cure cold, cough and fever,

flowers are used to prevent miscarriage and gum is used to control dysentery.

3.3 Phenology

The flowering and fruiting stage of the Sthalavrikshas were recorded and presented in Table 1. Among the 18 species,

Aegle marmelos was recorded in 17 temples, 19 sthalavriksha was observed in fruiting stage from December to March. *Prosopis spicigera* were recorded in 9 temples, the fruiting stage observed in 4 temples from January, the flowering stage observed in 3 temples in the month of January and February. The phenology of sthalavrikshas are presented in Table 2.

Table 1: List of sthalavriksha recorded in selected temples of Erode district

S. No.	Sthalavriksha	No. of temples
1	<i>Aegle marmelos</i> (L.) Correa	11
2	<i>Azadirachta indica</i> A. Juss.	7
3	<i>Bauhinia purpurea</i> L.	1
4	<i>Pterocarpus marsupium</i>	1
5	<i>Ficus racemose</i> L.	1
6	<i>Neolamarckia cadamba</i> (Roxb)	1
7	<i>Prosopis spicigera</i> (L.) Druce.	4
8	<i>Ziziphus mauritiana</i> Lam.	2
9	<i>Emblica officinalis</i> Gaertn.	1
10	<i>Mimusops elengi</i> L.	1
11	<i>Ficus religiosa</i> L.	2
12	<i>Saraca asoca</i> L.	1
13	<i>Tamarindus indica</i> L.	1
14	<i>Borassus flabellifer</i> L.	1
15	<i>Nyctanthes arbor-tristis</i> L.	1
16	<i>Albizia amara</i>	1
17	<i>Callophyllum inophyllum</i> L.	1
18	<i>Naringi crenulata</i>	1
19	<i>Thespesia populnea</i> (L.) Sol. ex Correa.	2
20	<i>Pongamia pinnata</i> L.	1
21	<i>Couroupita guianensis</i> Aubi.	1
22	<i>Mangifera indica</i> L.	1
23	<i>Atrocarpus heterophyllum</i> Lam.	1
24	<i>Madhuca longifolia</i>	1
25	<i>Stereospermum chelonoides</i> (L.F) DC	2

Table 2: Age, phenology, medicinal use and conservation status of enumerated sthalavrikshas

S. No.	Temple name	Binomial name	Local name	Family	Age of Sthalavriksha	Medicinal Properties	Phenology	IUCN Category
1	Bannari Amman Temple, Sathyamangalam	<i>Pterocarpus marsupium</i>	Vengai	Fabaceae	500 years	Diabetes treatment	Fl: Feb	Common
2	Choleeswarar temple, Nasiyanur.	<i>Bauhinia purpurea</i>	Mantharai	Caesalpiniaceae	25 years	Laxative, sores and boils, ulcers Small pox	Fl: Feb	Least concern
3	Natadreeswarar temple, Karunkalpalayam.	<i>Ficus racemose</i>	Athi	Moraceae	500 years	Cure mosquito bites, skin dryness	Fl: May Fr: July	Common
4	Subramaniyar temple, Pachamalai.	<i>Neolamarckia cadamba</i>	Kadamban	Rubiaceae	76 years	Fruits edible	Fl: Apr - May	Common
5	Magudeswara temple, Kodumudi.	<i>Prosopis spicigera</i>	Vanni	Mimosaceae	3000 Years	Fever, cough reduce heat	Fl: July Fr: Sep	Common
6	Adikesava Perumal Temple Paariyur.	<i>Ziziphus mauritiana</i>	Elanthai	Rhamnaceae	39.8 years	Edible purpose	Fr: Feb	Common
7	Adinarayana Perumal temple Paariyur.	<i>Emblica officinalis</i> z	Nelli	Euphorbiaceae	28.5 Years	Reduces high pressure Anti - ageing	Fl: Feb	Common
8	Amarapaneeswara temple, Paariyur.	<i>Mimusops elengi</i>	Magilam	Sapotaceae	-	Astringent cooling anthelmintic tonic bleeding gum, loose teeth	Fl: Apr Fr: June	Common
9	Sri Vetri Velayu thaswami temple Kathithamalai.	<i>Ficus religiosa</i>	Arasu	Moraceae	31 years	Piles, Diarrhea cut wounds ulcer	Veg: Dec	Common
10	Sri Sangameswarar temple, Bhavani.	<i>Ziziphus mauritiana</i> <i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Illathai Vilvam	Rhamnaceae Rutaceae	39 Years 31.8 Years	Edible purpose Deafness jaundice Conjunctivities	Fr: Feb	Common
11	Periyamariamman temple, Karukalpalayam.	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Vembu	Meliaceae	120 years	Intestinal worms, Skin ulcer, Analgesic	Veg: July	Common
12	Velayudhaswami Temple, Thindal.	<i>Prosopis spicigera</i>	Vanni	Mimosaceae	40 years	Piles, diarrhea, swelling	Fr: Jan	Common
13	Sri Thambiratti Amman Temple Thindal	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Vembu	Meliaceae	80 Years	Intestinal worms, skin ulcers analgesic	Veg: July	Common
14	Arulmigu Arudra kabaliswarar temple, Erode.	<i>Prosopis cineraria</i>	Vanni, Parambai.	Mimosaceae	160 years	Dysentery miscarriage Prevent	Fr: Jun	Common
15	Brahma Vishnu Shiva Temple, Erode.	<i>Saraca asoca</i>	Asokam	Caesalpiniaceae	78 Years	Dysmenorrhoea, depression	Veg: Feb	Endangered
16	Subramaniaswami Temple, Chennimalai.	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	Tamarind	Fabaceae	500 - 1000 years	Relief constipation relieve foreheads and fever	Fr: March	Common

17	Sri Vanavenkatesa Perumal temple, Thudupathi.	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Vembu	Meliaceae	100 years	Antifungal, low blood sugar, miscarriage infertility, stomach pain reliever.	Veg: Dec	Common
18	Thambi Kalai Ayyan temple, Thangamedu.	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Vilvam	Rutaceae	22 years	Jaundice, Conjunctivitis	Fr : Jun	Common
19	Gurunathswamy temple, Anthiyur.	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Vilvam	Rutaceae	13 years	Jaundice, Conjunctivitis	Fr: Jun	Common
20	Bala Thandayutha Pani temple, Reddaikaradu.	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Vilvam	Rutaceae	380 years	Jaundice, Conjunctivitis.	Fr: Jun	Common
21	Mahasakthi Temple, Athirediyur.	<i>Borassus fiabellifer</i>	Pannai	Arecaceae	118 years	Antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, Nausea, vomiting.	Fr: May	Common
22	Muthu Mariyamman temple, Chellappa-goundanpalayam, Pudhur.	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Vembu	Meliaceae	75 years	Stomach pain wound healing cure antibacterial antifungal acerbities	Veg: Dec	Common
23	Sri Iyamar Swamy, Sempulichi-palayam.	<i>Nyctanthes arbortristis</i>	Pavala malli	Oleaceae	52 years	Yellow dye for clothing	-	Common
24	Arulmigu Valla karuppasamy temple, Nallipalayam.	<i>Albizia amara</i>	Oonjai	Mimosaceae	102 years	Used as shampoo, relaxing cools body and its chemical free ulcer	Fl : Dec Fr : Jan	Common
25	Thiruthanikai Muruga Perumal temple, Chinnaparuvachi.	<i>Calophyllum inophyllum</i>	Punnai	Calophyllaceae	-	Bleeding, fever, eye diseases.	-	Common
26	Chokkanatchi Amman Temple, Kilambadi.	<i>Aegle Marmelos</i>	Vilvam	Rutaceae	105 years	Blood disorders, Nausea, Deafness.	Fr: Jan	Common
27	Arulmigu Bhuvanewara temple, Sathyamangalam.	<i>Naringi crenulata</i> <i>Mimusops elengi</i>	Maha-vilvam Mahilam	Rutaceae Sapotaceae	14 years 23 years	Leucorrhea stomach deafness	Fr : Jan	Common
28	Sri Venugopalasamy Sathyamangalam.	<i>Thespesia populnea</i>	Poova-rasan	Malvaceae	84 years	Itching cure	Fl: Jan	Commo
29	Kannimar Karupparayan Temple, Ariyappalayam.	<i>Pongamia pinnata</i>	Pungan	Fabaceae	300 years	Nausea vomiting	Fl : Jan	Common
30	Arulmigu Muthu Kumaraswamy temple, Pavalamalai, Gobi.	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Vilvam	Rutaceae	65 years	Blood disorders, Nausea, Deafness.	Fr: Jan	Common
31	Sivan Temple Kilambadi, Erode.	<i>Couroupita guianensis</i>	Naga-lingam	Lecythidaceae	160 years	Common cold, stomach ache, wounding, malaria.	Fl : Dec Fr Jan	Common
32	Kulavilakku Amman Temple Kalamangalam.	<i>Mangifera indica</i> <i>Aegle marmelos</i> <i>Prosopis spicigera</i>	Maa Vilvam Vanni	Anacardiaceae Rutaceae Mimosaceae	120 years 96years 120 years	Asthma, anti inflammatory. Nausea, Ulcer.	Fl: Apr Fr: Feb	Common
33	Lord Shiva temple, Modakurichi.	<i>Ficus religiosa</i>	Arasu	Moraceae	125 years	Piles, ulcer, diarrhea, cutting wounds.	Veg: Dec	Common
34	Karikali Amman temple, Modakurichi.	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Vembu	Meliaceae	108 years	Antimalarial, Anticancer, Antioxidant.	Veg: Dec	Common
35	Nageshwarar temple, Sivagiri.	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Vilvam	Rutaceae	38 years	Nausea, Ulcers.	Fr: Feb	Common
36	Selliamman temple, Thalavadi	<i>Artocarpous heterophyllus</i>	Pala	Moraceae	-	Antioxidants, Antiulcer	-	Common
37	Bala Murugan temple, Thalavadi	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Vilvam	Rutaceae	71 years	Nausea, Ulcers	Fr: Feb	Common
38	Shivan temple, Thalavadi	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Vilvam	Rutaceae	172 years	Nausea, Ulcers.	Fr: Feb	Common
39	Thanthondreesh-warar temple, Thalavadi.	<i>Madhucha longifolia L.</i>	Illupai	Sapotaceae	87 Years	Antiulcer	Fr: May	Common
40	Sri Kongalamman temple, Erode.	<i>Ficus religiosa</i>	Arasu	Moraceae	500years	Piles, Diarrhea, Cut wounds, Ulcer	Fr: Dec	Common
41	Arulmigu Choleeswarar temple, Perundurur	* <i>Stereospermum chelonoides</i>	Pathiri	Bignoniaceae	-	Diuretic, brain affection	Fr: Jan	Common
42	Sri Vanavenkatesa Perumal, Thudupathi.	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Neem	Meliaceae	500 years	Antimalarial, Anticancer, Antioxidant	Fl: Apr	Common
43	Madeswaran temple, Nasiyanoor.	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Vilvam	Rutaceae	120 years	Deafness, Jaundice, Dysentery, Ulcers, Antidiabetic,	Fr: Feb	Common
44	Karuppanar temple, Bhavani.	<i>Thespesia populnea</i>	Poov-arasan	Malvaceae	300 years	Itching cure	Fl: Jan	-
45	Prasanna Nanjundeswara temple, Bhavani.	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Vilvam	Rutaceae	19.9 years	Deafness, Jaundice, Dysentery, Ulcers, Antidiabetic	Fr: Feb	Common
46	Sugavaneswara temple, Perundurur.	* <i>Stereospermum chelonoides</i>	Pathiri	Bignoniaceae	-	Diuretic, Brain affection, Hiccup.	-	Common
47	Sundarapandee-swarar temple, Paasur.	<i>Naringi crenulata</i>	Maha Vilvam	Rutaceae	25.4 years	Nausea, Jaundice, Blood disorders.	Fr: Jan	Common

Fl: Flowering *-not found, Fr: Fruiting, Veg: Vegetative

3.4 Biocultural aspects of sthalavrikshas

In Thanthondreeshwarar temple at Thalavadi, the Sthalavriksha, *Madhucha longifolia* is considered as god tree.

In this tree, devotees are placing turmeric and kumkum, lighting of camphor and also keep flowers, tie yellow rope and cradle on the tree, people trust these kinds of worships

helps for quick marriage for virgin women and pregnant women pray for getting children.

In Thambi Kalai Ayyan temple, the Sthalavriksha is *Azadirachta indica*. In this tree the couples who don't have children's use to tie cradle and the unmarried virgin women use to tie mangalyam for fulfilment. In Bannari Amman temple at Sathyamangalam, the devotees tie their bangles and cradles on the Sthalavriksha *Pterocarpus marsupium*, pray for their health and getting children.

In Nataareeshwarar temple at Karukalpalayam, devotees tie paper slips containing their demand and sacred mantras at the branches of *Neolamarckia cadumba* Sthalavriksha. Devotees believe that their prayers would be accepted and the desired boons would be bestowed by the almighty, as it is conveyed through the Sthalavriksha.

3.5 Age of sthalavrikshas

To determine age of Sthalavriksha Mitchell *et al.* (1994) [5] method was adopted. The aim of the age determination of Sthalavriksha was age old as like that of temples. Among the surveyed Sthalavriksha the oldest was *Prosopis spicigera* 3000 years recorded in Magudeswarasamy temple at Kodumudi Erode district. Among the Sthalavriksha, *Azadirachta indica* ranges between 25 and 500, *Ficus religiosa* ranges between 120 and 318 years old *Madhucha longifolia* is 87 years old. The age of sthalavrikshas are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Temple category

S. No.	Category	No. of temples
1	<100 years	21
2	100-500 years	20
3	500-1000 years	1
4	1000-1500 years	NIL
5	1500-2000 years	NIL
6	2500-3000 years	1

3.6 Conversation status of sthalavriksha

The worship of plants and animals is known among a number of societies from early times. The Feng Chan` ritual of China`s ancient emperors for the protection of mountain forests, the sacred forest of the Indus and the hundreds of plants offered in religious worship in many Asiatic countries can be read in numerous ancient documents as well as in recent studies. Moreover, many individuals` plants are considered sacred and worshipped as well as protected in different parts of the world. Prominent among them are *Aegle marmelos*, *Ficus religiosa* and *Ocimum sanctum* in India, Mapple leaf tree in Canada, red wood tree in America and *Ficus religiosa* as well as *Ginko biloba* in China and Bhutan (Mohanty *et al.*, 1997) [6]. Similar role played by the temples of Erode districts of Tamil Nadu is evident from the present study. Sacred trees have been chosen on the basis of certain ecological, economical and mythological considerations. This has enabled a variety of local trees to be conserved within the temples.

4. Conclusion

A total number of 52 temples surveyed which includes 28 Shiva temples, 8 Perumal temples, 7 Amman temples, 7 Murugan temples and two other deity temples. Out of 52 temples surveyed, Sthalavrikshas were occurred in 47 temples. A total of 25 plant species of Sthalavriksha belonging to 14 families, belong to 18 genera. All the recorded 18 Sthalavrikshas species belong to angiosperms and

are dicotyledons. Among 14 families recorded, Caesalpiniaceae is the most dominant family represented by 3 species followed by Rutaceae and Moraceae represented 2 species each. Among the 25 species, *Aegle marmelos* was the most frequently recorded in temples followed by *Prosopis spicigera*, *Ficus religiosa* and *Azadirachta indica*. It is concluded that the sthalavriksha worship is an age old practice, myths, beliefs and folklore play a major role in the existence of sthalavriksha worship and this customs helps in plant conservation.

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