

(198)

Importance of the Conservation of Natural Forests in Protecting Red Listed Medicinal Plant *Terminalia arjuna* in the Perspective of Indigenous System of Medicine

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Abstract

Sri Lanka the country which is rich in natural resources has a percentage of 29.9 (1,933,000 ha) covered by forest. In present the forests are being destroyed due to various reasons. Increased population leads to increased constructions and urbanization are some reasons of forest destructions. Indigenous system of medicine explains on the importance of various natural resources which are highly effective in treating multiple ailments especially, describes on many herbal plants. The study aims on the importance of red listed plant *Terminalia arjuna* which is being an extinct plant due to forest destruction. A systematic literature review has been carried out to gather information from Unani and Ayurveda classical texts, Pharmacopeias, ethno-botanical literatures, scientific journals, and web. Unauthentic articles and articles which did not match the theme and eligibility criteria were excluded. 39 articles were finally included for the study. The key words used in searching were *T. arjuna*, forest conservation, natural resources, red list plants in Sri Lanka, Indigenous medicine and therapeutic effects. Results revealed that *T. arjuna* belongs to the family Combretaceae which is widely spread in mixed dry deciduous tropical forests of Sri Lanka. Various parts of this plant (specially the stem-bark) are very effective in treating cardiovascular complications such as hypertension, dyslipidemia, anginal pain and congestive heart failure. This plant contains tannin, the cardiac glycoside possessed from the bark and fruit is known to be an excellent cardiac tonic which is potent in strengthening the cardiac muscles, in improving the blood circulation of coronary artery and prevents the heart muscle from ischemic damage. Therefore, this study focuses on the importance of the conservation of forests and natural resources which are being helpful in the system of Indigenous medicine in various ways.

Keywords: Natural resources, Forest, Indigenous medicine, *Terminalia arjuna*, Cardiac tonic