

Flora Imagery in Guru Granth Sahib

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Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) - is, for all time, the guide for the Sikhs; held in deep reverence. The revelations and teachings are a veritable treasure-house for all humanity. In SGGS, the Divine Spirituality and Nature symbiotically peripheralizes one another. The Divine is perceived in the natural order. SGGS is the repository of naturalists's understanding as well as a vast knowledge of the flora of this world. Being the holy *Magnum opus* of the Sikhs, this scripture is the sacred repository of all sciences. SGGS has assimilated botanical treasure in the form of plants, trees, fruits, flowers, herbs, shrubs, etc to a great extent. The ecological Orientation is a recurring theme in this religious scripture. The human life without flora is unthinkable.

The plant symbolism and imagery is a powerful and vital source of botany. A few pockets of this world enjoy such a varied landscape as that of India, and the diversity of Nature reflect the wonderfully rich flora. What is flora? "Collective term used to describe all the plants that are found in a particular area, or that occurred at a particular time". (Phillip's Nature Encyclopedia). In simple words, it is a study of the plants, flowers, trees, herbs and shrubs, etc. One emerges absolutely enthralled after a detailed study of floral references in SGGS. We will discuss some flora images alphabetically:

PrlDw loVY dwK ibjaurIAW ikkir bljY jtu]

[SGGS:1379]

Acacia:

Acacia (*A. arabica*, *A. Jaoquenonti*) is a thorny evergreen shrub or tree, widely found in tropical and subtropical regions. Leaves are compound, flowers are white or yellow. It is about 4-59 feet in height.

Farid, the farmer plants the tree of acacia arabica and desirous the grapes of Bijour. (SGGS: 1379).

Asafoetida:

It is a perennial herb of Afghanistan and Iran. A milky juice exudes from cuts made at the base of the stem and root. This resin is obtained mostly during the rainy season. It is a herb of strong odour. It is full of medicinal properties, especially for stomach, cough, worms, etc. Sometimes it is used for flavouring food produces. Scientific name is *Ferula asafetida*, Punjabi name is *Hing or Heeg*.

PrlDw rhl su byVI ihM|u dl gel kQUrl gMDu]

[SGGS:1379]

Farid, she remains smeared with asafoetida and loses the fragrance of musk. (SGGS: 1379) (SGGS:718)

Banana:

Bana (*Musa Paradisicea L*) is a long curved fruit, yellow or reddish when ripe having soft, creamy flesh. Tree is 10-30 feet in height. The flowers develop into bunches 50-150 fruits. Bananas ripe on the tree in 75-100 days. About 100 varieties are cultivated world-wide:

kdll puhp DUp prgws]

[SGGS:1162]

The Lord shines in the plantain, flower and the sun-shine. (SGGS: 1162)

(SGGS: 718, 1369)

Banyan Tree:

Banyan tree (*Ficus benghalensis*) is an evergreen large tree. Its branches moves downwards like aerial shoots that take root, forming new trunks. These trunks form a single tree. The height of the tree is 70-100 ft. It is an indigenous plant of peninsular India. The flowers and fruits are inconspicuous. In the ancient India Literature, its mention is well known. Its age is guessed as 100 years:

btk blj mih riv rihE jw ko qlin lok ibsQwr]

[SGGS:340]

He whose expanse is the three worlds, is contained in the seed of banyan-tree. (SGGS: 340).

Bermuda Grass:

It is a perennial grass from Asia and Europe, but now spread worldwide. Being a creeping grass, it spreads widely through the networks of Rhizomes and Stolons. It is a lawn and pasture grass become an invasive weed. Scientific name is *Cynodon dactylon*. Its leaves are small and soft. Worldwide, it is known by many names such as Dab grass, holy grass, Greenery, Star grass, Lawn grass, Bamba grass, Devil grass, etc.

PrlDw Qlau pvwhl dBu] jY swel loVih sBu]

[SGGS:1348]

Farid, if thou long for the Lord of all, then become like the spear grass (Bermuda) of the path way. (SGGS: 1378).

Flame of the Forest:

It is commonly known as Palas tree (*Butea Frondosa* or *B. Monosperma*). A small or medium deciduous tree having grey or light brown bark. Flowers are large, olive green or velvet dark in colours. Platters, cups etc are made up of from the leaves of this tree. The tree is also cultivated in gardens. The name *Butea* was coined by Koenig or Roxburgh in honour of John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute who "for several years lived in retirement in *Bute*, engaged in agricultural and botanical pursuits". (Encyclopedia Brit, 4:459, 1959). The specific name *frondosa* means 'leafy' or 'full of leaves'.

sMgiq sMq sMig lig aUcy ijau plp plws Kwie lljY]

[SGGS:1325]

As *Butea frondosa* becomes part and parcel of the *Ficus religiosa*, similarly meeting with the saints society, one becomes Sublime. (SGGS: 1325)

Castor Plant:

Castor plants (*Ricinus dichotoma* L) seed is extracted and yellow oil is obtained which is used for burning and beneficial for machine parts. It has many medicinal properties especially for Arthoritices, Cough, Swelling, Pimples, etc. It is known in Punjabi language as Arind, Rind or Rindi. It is also used to make someone vomit or delectate:

qum cMdn hm ierMf bwpury sMig qumwry bsw]

[SGGS:486]

Thou art Sandal and I am the poor Castor plant, dwelling close to thee.
(SGGS: 486).

Celandine:

Celandine (*Chellidonium majus*) has serrated leaves, yellow flowers and narrow seed pods. Its yellow sap was used to cure warts. This plant is commonly found in Asia, Europe, Britain and United States. It has some medicinal properties.

KKVIAw suhwvIAw IgVIAw Ak kMiT]

[SGGS:319]

The Celandine fruits look beautiful, attached to the parent stalk. (SGGS: 319) (SGGS: 147, 148, 1286).

Cloves:

Cloves (*Caryophyllus aromaticus L*) is a small, aromatic, evergreen tree that is native to the Moluccas. Flowers are very small, appear in clusters. Its dried flower buds are widely used in cookery. Oil of cloves is distilled from the stems. Height of the plant 1-4 ft. It is a healing medicine for mouth and stomach illness. It is virtuous to diseases of sex – Vigour, Paralysis, Deficiency, etc.

iknhl bnijAw kWsl qWbw iknhl laug supwrl]

[SGGS:1123]

Some deal in bronze and copper and some in cloves and betel – nuts,
(SGGS: 1123).

Coarse Grain:

It is a bush resembled to *Chenopodium album*, whose coarse grains are used by poor people. Its scientific name is *Paspalum Scrobiculatum*. In Punjabi its name is Kaudra, Kauday, Kaudara, Kaudo, etc.

Pwty nwkn tUty kWdn kodau ko Busu KelhY]

[SGGS:524]

With a torn nose and maimed shoulder, thou shalt eat the straw of coarse grain. (SGGS: 524) (SGGS: 990, 1381).

Coconut Palm:

Coconut palm (*Cocos Nucifera L*) is the member of monocotyledonous tree found in a tropical and subtropical regions. The leaves are Palmate (fan like) or Pinnate feather like). All palms produce Drupes, such as dates or Coconuts. Tree is about 10-25 meters in height; The oil is extracted from the dry copra known as Coconut oil or Coconut butter. In Punjabi, it is known as *Giri, Khupa, Narial, Nariel*, etc.

grl Cuhwry KWdlAw mxin@ syjVIAw]

[SGGS:417]

They are Coconuts and dates and enjoyed on the couches. (SGGS: 417) (SGGS: 718, 1382)

Colocynth (Gourds):

It is an annual vine and ornamental, hard shelled fruit. It resembles to watermelon. It bears certain medicinal properties. In Punjabi it is known as *Kauram, Kaura Dhuma*. The shape of the fruit is almost spherical, irregular or bottle shaped.

mnu pvnu duie qUMbw krl hY jug jug swrd swjl]
[SGGS:334]

My mind and breath, I have made the two gourds of my fiddle and the Lord of all the ages I have made it frame. (SGGS: 334) (SGGS: 147, 338, 403, 708, 1375, 1413).

Datura:

Datura (Datura Stramonium) is a poisonous annual weed. It has foul-smelling leaves. Flowers are large white or violet coloured. It produces usual drugs, one of which is used in the treatment of asthma. Some plants are ornamentals worldwide. It is also known as thorn-apple.

quml qumw ivsu Aku DqUrw inmu Plu]

[SGGS:147]

Garlic:

Garlic (**Allium Sativum**) is a bulbous herb, having a bulb made up of cloves. It is commonly used for flavouring. It's foliage resembles with onion. It bears some medicinal properties.

kblr swkqu AYsw hY jYsl Isn kl Kwin]

[SGGS:1365]

Kabir, as is piece of garlic, so is an infidel. (SGGS: 1365)

Gram:

Gram bean (*Cicer arietum*) is a leguminous plant. It is rich in protein. The seeds of this plant is commonly used for human or animal food. It has different varieties like Broad bean, French bean, Soya bean, etc. Sometimes, this name applied to non-leguminous plants.

ijau kip ky kr musit cnn kl lubiD n iqAwgu dieE]
jo jo krm kley lwlc isau qy iPir grih pirE]

[SGGS:336]

As a monkey, through greed does not let go handful of grams in its hand and is thereby entrapped, so do all deeds done by man through greed they ultimately become halter round his neck (SGGS: 336)

Grapes:

Grapes (*vitis Vinifera L*) is a native of Asia, grows in temperate and subtropical climates It's fruit is eaten raw, dried. Its quality is wholly dependent on soil, climate, topography and cultivation methods. Punjabi name for it is Dhak, Kishmish, etc.

PrlDw loVY dwK ibjaurIAW ikkir bljY jtu]

[SGGS:1379]

Farid, the farmer plants the tree of acacia Arabic and desires the grapes of Bijour (SGGS: 1379)

Gularia Tree:

Cularia tree (*G. agallocha L*) is a member of genus plants native to South Africa. It has fleshy leaves with spiny-edges. They have clusters of yellow or orange or red drooping flowers. It is commonly known as Aloe.

cMdn Agr kpUr lypn iqsu sMgy nhl pRliq]

[SGGS:1018]

Sandal, aloe, camphor-paste, the earth loves them not. (SGGS: 1018)
(SGGS: 14)

Holy Basil Plant:

It is a tropical plant of the mint family. Its leaves are used for flavouring. Flowers are white or purple in colour. Scientific name in *Ocimum basilicum* or *O. Sanctum*.

Kycr BUcr qulsl mwlw gur prswdl pwieAw]

[SGGS: 973]

Breath-control, fixation and wearing of the rosary of sweet basil, these I have found contained in the Guru's grace. (SGGS: 973)

Lotus:

It is the common name for any water lily of the genus *Nelumbo* and several tropical species belonging to the genus *Nymphaea*. The *Nelumbo Pentapetala* has worldwide distribution. It is known by different names, viz Lotus Lily, Pond nuts, Wonkapin, Water Chinaquapin. The leaves float at the surface and showy flowers of white, red, pink, blue or yellow. Edward Sylvester of Chorley was the first man, who introduced this flower. The stalk of this flower is upto 30 feet and width 10 inches. It is the sign of "Heart and Truth".

crx kml Awqm AwDwr]

[SGGS: 181]

Lord's lotus feet are the support of their soul. (SGGS: 181) (SGGS: 13, 23, 24, 59, 85, 181, 189, 249, 254, 263, 272, 340, 384, 352, 454, 496, 534, 857, 898, 938, 925, 974, 975, 990, 1209, 1245, 1267, 1293, 1381, 1402).

Jasmine:

Jasmine (*Jasminum officinale*) is an evergreen or deciduous shrub. It has fragrant yellow, pink or white flowers. Its oil is used in different perfumes. Height of the shrub is 20 feet.

plq bsn kuMd dsn ipRA sihq kMT mwl muktu slis mor pMK cwih jlau]

[SGGS: 1402]

Thous wearest yellow robe, hast teeth like the Jasmine flower, abidest with thy love, hast rosary upon the neck and eager embellisheth thy head with the crown of the peacock feathers. (SGGS: 1402).

Madder:

Madder (*Rubia tinctorium*) is a perennial vine native to Asia and Europe.

It has greenish-yellow flowers. In ancient times, a red dye was produced from its roots. Height of the plant is upto 3.9 feet.

inrml soie bxl hir bwxl mnu nwim mjITY rMgnw]

[SGGS: 1081]

By means of the Divine Gurbani, immaculate repute is obtained and the soul is imbued with the Name madder. (SGGS: 1081) (SGGS: 54, 311, 346, 400, 454, 644, 708, 721, 722, 729, 731, 777, 786, 985, 1051, 1212, 1279, 1379).

