

HORTUS INDICUS MALABARICUS (GARDEN OF MALABAR OF INDIA)

By

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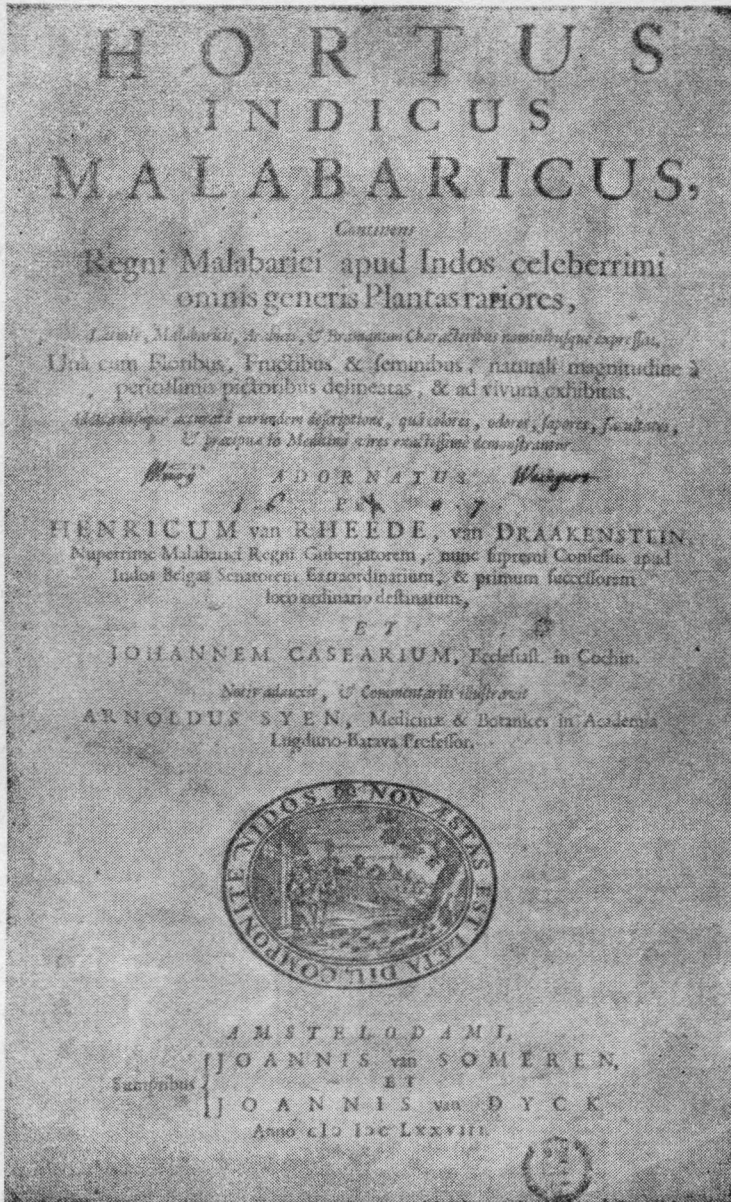
The Europeans who arrived at India after the perilous voyages were astonished at the variety of flora and fauna of India. Some of the European Doctors evinced keen interest in identifying the locally available plants along with their medicinal uses as known and used by the local physicians and made efforts to publish books with illustrations of these plants and also other substances of medicinal value.

A book, rather a monumental work, with many illustrations is Hortus Indicus Malabaricus written by Hendrik Adrian Van Rheede (1637-1691). Van Rheede was a Commander of Cochin in the employ of the Dutch East India Company from 1673-1678. It was during these years, he had time to study and collect a large amount of information about the plants of Kerala. Van Rheede died on voyage from Ceylon to Surat in 1691 and was buried in Surat where a very fine monument has been built over his tomb. But a still more enduring monument is his scientific memoir, Hortus Indicus Malabaricus.

Hortus Indicus Malabaricus is a work of 12 folio volumes with 794 illustrations, published in Amsterdam during 1678 and 1703. The pictures of each plant of Malabar have been prepared with detail and the names are mentioned in four languages viz., Latin, Arabic, Sanskrit and Malayalam. While collecting information regarding the plants of Kerala, the author sought help of the natives and the Portuguese. In the preparation of this work for publication, he received assistance from scientists and medical men of Holland. Some historians are of the opinion that this book was prepared by Reverend Father Mathews, born in Italy and spent about 60 years in Kerala as a Priest. His name was mentioned in the introduction of the book. The title page indicates that Prof. Johannes Munnicks, M.D., of the Faculty of Anatomy and Botany, was joint-author of one volume and that Abrahamus Appoot, M.D., added notes, commentary and illustrations to another.

Four renowned physicians and scholars of Kerala of that period by name Ranga Bhattan, Vinayaka Pandithan, Appu Bhattan and Itty Atchuthan, mainly contributed to this work. Hortus Indicus Malabaricus contains statements of these persons regarding their respective roles in the construction of this work. The statement of the first three persons was combinedly written in Marathi language and attested with their signatures. The statement of Itty Atchuthan, who belonged to Alleppey district, is in Malayalam language and the signature at the end of the statement is "Kollattu Vaidyan". This perhaps is the first time in History that the script of Malayalam was printed.

English translation of the Marathi statement is as follows :



Title page of the voluminous work, Hortus Indicus Malabaricus, by Van Rheedee.

स्वामिाश्री रागबिवाहनवाक्यपुस्तक राक्षससंबन्धनेत्रवक्रुव १० को
 जीरा जसावणी बेंसिकेरगन्धु त थाविनायकपंडित उग्र नह तेगवेद्य
 तानिकोविवाकुमदार आडिकि फाडु त्यावातिरोषान ह्यामलवारदेवा
 नु आबिले ओषधमात्र वसवानिद्रादुरवंत ओळखतेल्यामनुष्याकनु
 म्मारोदेसुनु वेतेभावांतुपेद्रवूनतिंतिवारवद आणवूनत्यात्या फाडावे फस
 फूल पातवीतसमस्त त्यात्यानुतुकाला वरिसपादूनतिंतीविन्दरितीत्याउप
 षत आमिडामनेल्यावेद्यग्रेवावातिचैताप्रभाषीत्यात्याओषधावेगुण
 वातुतुवसा नजो जोगुण आमकाकळेलेतोवात्या आरवदांरी नावपळे उनु
 दुगन्दिहानिबर्षसकानि साजे आमिलगिगपूतुहाडिबुसपादूनदिलातेल
 टिक अत्रियाणुचकनत्र अत्रियाणु आमिडामचीतिसाणिकर्णुदिली
 वेसत्यद्वणुमातुनेजा इदद्याणुनागरवस्थानह वगवतुदिली श्री

जगसदु

विनायकपंडित

आपवेगुण

“On the tenth day of the black fortnight of Chaitra month and Rakshasa year of Salivahana saka 1597, on a camp at Cochin, we Rangbhatta, Vinayak Pandit and Appu Bhattan (eye physician) write the following in testimony of truth so that no one should treat this as false : On a message from Adrikin Fondre, Commander of Cochin, we collected herbs, flowers, fruits which are used for medicine from this Malabar Desha through a person who was paid for it and who was specialised in discriminating medicinal plants. This material was collected in the various seasons when they are grown. Then on, all the herbs, fruits, flowers etc. were painted. Later on we testified and tallied this material with the descriptions in the *Materia Medica* which we had brought alongwith us. We then described these herbs, their effect etc. of which we had experimental knowledge. For the last two years both in mornings and evenings we were doing this. Whatever is written over here should not be treated as false hence we are attesting our signatures below.

Ranga Bhatta.

Vinayak Pandit.

Apu Dev.”

The statement of Itty Achuthan (Kollatu Vaidyan) is written in the so called “Kolaluthu script” of Malayalam which was employed to write documents upto the 18th century. The following is the English translation of this statement :

“By the order of the Commander Hendrik Van Rheede, I, a Malabar Physician of the Ezhava caste, born in Kollad House at Kadakkarapally in Karapuram village came to the Cochin Fort and dictated as already agreed, the details of the trees, shrubs, creepers and grasses in Kerala providing with diagrams, and the medicinal treatment with them, from the practical experiences as well as the erudition gained from our precious old books, to Manuel Carner, the official translator of the Company, so as to record them in books after clearing the doubts, in such a manner that no learned men of this field in Kerala could find fault with it and for this it is written in Cochin Fort on 20th April, 1675.

Kollatuvaidyan.”

There is also a statement by Manuel Carner, the official translator of the Company, written in the so called “Grantha Lipi” of Malayalam. The following is the English translation :

“By the order of the Commander Hendrika Van Rheede, I, Manuel Carner, born, married and put up in Cochin, working as the official translator of the Company at Cochin Fort, wrote down in books both in Malayalam and Portuguese languages separately, the details, virtues and uses of (medicinal) trees, shrubs, creepers and grasses in Kerala and their flowers, fruits, seeds, roots and essences etc. being dictated by a Malabar Physician, Kolladan, belonging to Ezhava caste, born in Karapuram village, according to my previous agreement thus the work is completed after clearing all doubts and mistakes and for this agreement my signature is given in this writings in Cochin Fort on the day, the 19th April, 1675.

Manuel Carner.”

The information collected for the preparation of this voluminous work is about 3 centuries old and therefore reveals both the ecological and medicinal values of these

പ്രപഞ്ചവും മനുഷ്യവും ഭൂമിയിലും
 വിദ്യയും വൈദ്യമാനസികതയും വൈദ്യശാസ്ത്രത്തിൽ
 വെളിച്ചം കിട്ടാൻ കഴിയുന്നതിനായി കർമ്മവും കൊച്ചിയിൽ
 ആയ മണ്ഡലം പെൻഷൻസർമാർക്കു നി
 യമിക്കും പ്രകാരം ക്രിസ്റ്റീനി വർ
 റാറ്റി കൂടി റെട്ടി വിടെ കല്പനയാൽ
 കൂടുതൽ നൂ കവിമണ്ഡലത്തിൽ പെക്കോ
 വണ്ണമിയ കൊല്ലാടെ നെ നമ്പെ
 മൊട്ടിട്ടു ഒരു മലയാള വൈദ്യ
 ന്നു പൊൻകെട്ട പൊൻകുത്തിൽ
 ചാത്തിയ മലയാളത്തിലെ വൃക്കി
 ന്നും, ചെറു വൃക്കിനും, വളു
 ത്തിൽ ചുവടു കട്ടകളും അതിന്റെ
 ചുവു ന്നും കാലകളും വിത്തു
 കളും പെൻഷനും, വേദകളും
 പാഠകളും നൂ പാഠകളും
 പാഠകളും ചാഴിയിലും മലയാളം പ
 ന്നായിലും വകുപ്പിപ്പ ചെല്ല
 കയും ചെയ്തു. ആവണ്ണം ഒരു ന്നും
 മെലം ചാത്തിയെനെരാടും പണ്ണം
 ചാഴിയിൽ കൂടി. നിശ്ചയത്തിൽ ചാത്തി
 ഒരു അം ആ ബ്രിൻ മാനം ധനം
 മെലനനൻ ധനു മക കൊച്ചിൻ കൊ
 റു മിൻ ചാഴിയിൽ.



medicinal plants of that period. A comparison between this knowledge of 3 centuries old with that of the present day may enlighten the scholars of various disciplines regarding the flora of the Malabar Coast.

I wish to acknowledge with thanks that the information about the life of Van Rheede and magnum opus Hortus Indicus Malabaricus was brought to my knowledge by Dr. D. V. Subba Reddy who also collected the photographs of Title page etc. for the museum of the Institute.

I acknowledge with thanks the help rendered by Sri Shamsuddin Kunju, Lexicon Assistant, Malayalam Lexicon, Trivandrum and Prof. S.R. Kulkarni, Head of the Department of Marathi, Osmania University, Hyderabad for translating the respective Malayalam and Marathi statements.

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सारांश

हार्टस् इंडिकस् मलाबारिकस्

—बी. बी. एस्. शास्त्री

उन सभी पुस्तकों में जो यूरोपियनों द्वारा भारतीय औद्धिज्जों पर लिखे गये हैं, सबसे अधिक खण्डों वाला पुस्तक है, "हार्टस् इंडिकस् मलाबारिकस्", जो 'हेनडरीक आंड्रियन फान रीड (१६३७-१६९१) द्वारा लिखा गया है। रीड कोचीन के सेनापति के पदपर डच ईस्ट इंडिया कम्पनी द्वारा नियुक्त किये गये थे। हार्टस् इंडिकस् मलाबारिकस् नामक पुस्तक के १२ बृहत्परिमाण के खण्डों में ७९४ चित्र हैं, जिसका प्रकाशन अमेस्टर्डम् में १६७८-१७०३ के समय हुआ। मलाबारके प्रत्येक औद्धिज्ज विस्तार से इसमें चित्रित किये हैं तथा उनके नाम चार भाषाओं में लिखे हैं यानि-लैटिन, अरबी, संस्कृत और मलयालम में। इस पुस्तक के लिखने में लेखक को जिन व्यक्तियों से सहायता मिली, उनमें चार स्थानीय चिकित्सक थे, जिनके नाम हैं—रङ्गभट्टन्, विनायक पण्डितन्, अप्पु भट्टन्, और इत्ती अच्युतन्। इनमें प्रथम तीन ने मराठी भाषामें अपनी सहायता के विषय को ग्रन्थस्थ किये तथा चौथे ने मलयालम भाषा में। प्रस्तुत निबन्ध में दोनों कथनों के अनुवाद भी इङ्गलिश में दिये गये हैं।