Cowpathy for Plant Health

by CHITRA BALASUBRAMANIAM

I had heard of panchagavya on a number of occasions, and the usage varied — for auspicious occasions, purification, in temples and also for safeguarding plant, animal and human health. However, the effect of panchagavya on plants and its extensive use in agriculture was made clear to me when speaking to enthusiastic practitioners of organic farming.

The use of panchagavya seems to be more pronounced in the southern states of India as opposed to north India. I spoke with Dr. K. Natarajan, M.B.B.S., who has dedicated quite a bit of his life to the making of panchagavya, propagating its uses, spreading awareness and educating and training individuals.

“My knowledge has not been patented,” said Natarajan. “I freely teach it to everyone and train people. I have organic farmers coming to me from India and all over the world like Cuba, Malaysia, the United States, South Africa, etc. to learn how to make and use panchagavya.”

The objective is to share the knowledge which is freely available in the Vedas. The Vedas, containing the tenets of Hinduism, are a large body of text in Sanskrit. It is the foundation of the religion and is divided into four parts — Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda.

The following is a short overview of panchagavya, and farmers will need to spend more time researching and understanding it to achieve maximum benefits.

WHAT IS PANCHAGAVYA?

Panchagavya essentially means a combination of five elements from the cow. The word panch in Sanskrit means five and gavya means from the cow or cattle, although there are several other meanings for gavya in Sanskrit. The cow is considered sacred and worshipped in Hinduism. Therefore, panchagavya is a solution made from five substances derived from the cow — cow dung, cow urine, milk, curd and ghee. Curd is similar to yogurt. It is obtained when milk is allowed to curdle or by using a souring agent like lemon, vinegar or old curd. Ghee is clarified butter — when it starts bubbling and giving off a nice smell, the boiling is stopped. Ghee is indigenous to India and has tremendous healing properties. It is also delicious when used in cooking.

PREPARATION

Dr. Natarajan’s initiation into the world of panchagavya for plants started at a temple. He speaks to me in Tamil and recounts a story, “I visited the temple of Lord Shiva in Kodumudi on Maha Shivaratri — a festival celebrated in honor of Shiva. I was given a small quantity of panchagavya by the priest as a Prasad. After eating it, I asked him what it was and its benefit. He scolded me, saying, ‘you are a doctor but still do not know the benefits of panchagavya.’ I then delved deep into the subject to come out with the present formulation of panchagavya.”

The priest explained to him that panchagavya protects the body by increasing immunity, and reducing physical and other ailments. It is this protective shield of panchagavya, and its recuperative properties, which are also harnessed by plants.

Dr. Natarajan explains the classic Vedic proportions: four parts milk,
stirred. The quantity of cow dung remains
unchanged. The mixture is stirred twice every day for
three days. On the fourth day, the rest of the ingredients are added. The
mixture is stirred twice every day for 15 days. The pot has to be kept cov-
ered by a mesh to avoid infestation by flies.”

Ramawamy explains, “If the solu-
tion is not stirred it is liable to develop
worms. The milk floats above and
worms set in. Stirring it a couple of
times every day keeps all of this at
bay.” Stirring it every day, the solu-
tion lasts without spoiling for more
than 6 months. This mix has been
researched and tests conducted to find
out the chemical composition and
biological properties in it.

For use on agriculture land, the
panchagavya solution can be mixed
with irrigation water at 20 liters of
panchagavya per acre of farmland.
This can be fed into the crops by drip
irrigation or flow irrigation. It can be
used on seedlings and plants.

When the panchagavya mixture is
sprayed on acid lime there is continu-
ous flowering throughout the year, the
fruits are juicy with good aroma and
the shelf life is extended more than 10
days. Farmers also see similar results
for mango including dense flowering
and extended shelf life of the fruits
with the fruit retaining its flavor and
aroma longer.

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