A historical overview on flora with reference to the Mahāvamsa

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The intention of this paper is to identify and categorize the utilization, endemism and distribution of flora mentioned in the Mahāvamsa. The paper is based on the first part of the Mahāvamsa which represents the history of the Anuradhapura kingdom of Sri Lanka, till the end of King Mahāsēna’s reign.

When categorizing the flora in the Mahāvamsa as utilization, physical features and territory, there are nine major sectors to consider; grain, palm, flowers, bushes, creepers, herbals, aquatic, and sacred. Flora mentioned in the leading chapters in Mahāvamsa have an Indian origin. A vast number of edible plants and palms were also emphasized in Mahāvamsa. And also it is clearly mentioned in Mahāvamsa, in comparison to the other regions, the Malwathu Oya region had a lush cover of flora than others due to its fertility.

Most of the flora mentioned in the Mahāvamsa were connected to Buddhism in many different ways. Some gardens consisting of a good amount of flora was also mentioned in Mahāvamsa.

As part one of the Mahāvamsa is mostly based on the Anuradhapura period, it was difficult to formulate an idea about flora in other regions of Sri Lanka. However, there were more than 54 types of flora including non-endemic types of flora in the Mahāvamsa.

**Key words:** Mahāvamsa, Flora, Anuradhapura, Endemism