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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