

AN ETHNOBOTANICAL STUDY OF MADHYA PRADESH 1: PLANTS USED AGAINST VARIOUS DISORDERS AMONG TRIBAL WOMEN

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ABSTRACT: *The ethnobotanical survey was made during last two years in the tribal population of Madhya Pradesh. Valuable information about the medicinal use of certain wild species against various diseases amongst tribal women are obtained by personal interviews. Some species are being used by them against various venereal diseases. Different plant parts of few species are also used by them for antifertility purposes. Some of these interesting medicinal properties of plants are given in the present communication.*

INTRODUCTION

The history of medicine dates back perhaps to the origin of the human race. 'Rigveda' seems to be the earliest record of plants used as medicine for curing various diseases. Later on in Indian systems of medicine, 'Susruta Samhita' and 'Caraka Samhita' appeared as the most important work. A large portion of this country is covered with forests which yield a good number of medicinal plants. These plants are being used extensively in Ayurvedic system of medication since many centuries.

The development of biochemistry, bacteriology, immunology and discovery of synthetic drugs and antibiotics outdated the general use of ayurvedic medicines. The pharmaceutical industries getting state patronage helped in the popularization of the modern medicines. Today, however, the pendulum is swinging back towards the safer ayurveda, due to the unsolved problems of modern medicines, drug

toxicity, drug resistance and heavy cost of treatment of allopathic medicines. The good health of our forefathers has much to commend Ayurveda. Without recourse to sophisticated, synthetic and often hazardous drugs of modern medicine, they enjoyed positive good health and long life.

In Madhya Pradesh the role of medicinal plants becomes very vital and significant because of two important reasons. The first and most important one is that the flora of this state is highly rich in medicinal plants due to good climatic conditions. Secondly it is the most undeveloped state where many tribal communities like Gonds, Gujars, Kols, Lodhi etc. are inhabited in remote places and depend upon wild resources from forest plants present around them. In India importance of ethnobotany has already been emphasized by several workers (Chopras et al., 1958; Ahuja, 1965; Shah and Joshi 1971 and Jain et al., 1973) however, except the

work of Jain (1962, 1963) as yet there appears to be no record of such studies in Madhya Pradesh. Present paper gives an account of medicinal uses of plants so far unknown.

Method of Study

The ethnobotanical survey was carried out during 1979 and 1980. Frequent field trips were made and the major portion of the tribal population of the state was explored. Interested and valuable information's about the medicinal uses of certain wild species were obtained and recorded by personal interviews with the tribals. Main emphasis was given to those plants which were used by tribal women for curing various venereal diseases. The specimens collected at the time of field visit were identified and preserved in the herbarium of the Botany department, University of Saugar, Saugar. The species are arranged in alphabetical order with details of family and local name.

Observation

During the survey period it has been observed that although tribals of this state are still in primitive stage of economic life and depend upon wild resources around them for their needs, they possess fairly good knowledge about the medicinal uses of plants. Due to the constant association with the forest environment and in the absence of any other medical facilities available to them in their localities, they have evolved curious knowledge by the method of tribal and error and have developed their own way of diagnosis and treatment for ailments. It has been observed that tribal women are mainly suffering from venereal diseases like gonorrhoea, syphilis etc. For curing these they have used various wild plant species. A few species are used by them during various disorders in menstruation period,

and also for causing abortion and smooth delivery. Some of these interesting medicinal properties of wild plants recorded during survey period given below.

Abrus precatorius Linn. (Papilionaceae) 'Gunch' or 'Ratti':

Roots and seeds of this plant when made into paste with milk and given daily for three days induce abortion. Seeds are used by the tribal people for antifertility in women. Seeds are soaked in rice water and left overnight. The decanted rice water is given on the third day of menstruation early morning. As many seeds are soaked as the number of years for which contraception is required.

Abutilon indicum G. Don (Malvaceae) 'Tipari':

Leaf – decoction is given in gonorrhoea, urethrites.

Achyranthes aspera Linn. (Amaranthaceae) 'Addhajhara':

Root paste with cold water is given to stop bleeding after abortion. It is prescribed for three days from the time of abortion. It is also given for early delivery.

Albizzia lebeck Benth. (Mimosaceae) 'Siris':

Bark and seeds are given in gonorrhoea.

Aloe barbedensis Mill (Liliaceae) 'Gwarpatha':

Leaves, after removing their epidermal tissue are given in gonorrhoea and menstrual suppression. A chemical 'Barbelon' is used for making tablets in Europe and America for abortion.

Argemone Mexicana Linn. (Papaveraceae)
'Pilli Katai':

Leaf juice is given in gonorrhoea and also in dropsy, jaundice and skin diseases.

Aristolochia indica Linn.
(Aristolochiaceae) 'Isharmul':

Dried stem and roots of the plants in small doses regulate menstruation.

Bauhinia variegata Linn. (Caesalpinaceae)
'Kachnar':

Decoction of bark is given in syphilis, serofula, ulcers, leprosy and other skin diseases.

Boerhaavia diffusa Linn. (Nyctaginaceae)
'Patharchata':

Roots are used in diseases like gonorrhoea, dropsy and also in diseases of heart and kidney.

Cannabis sativa Linn. (Cannabaceae)
'Bhang':

Dried leaves and flowers are given in gonorrhoea.

Carcia papaya Linn. (Caricaceae) 'Papita':

Pulp of fruits is used for easy abortion. Its aqueous extract reduces the reproductive capacity.

Cuminum cyminum Linn. (Apiaceae)
'Zira':

Fruits are commonly prescribed in diarrhoea, dyspepsia and hoarseness of voice in women. A poultice of fruits is a resolvent of swelling of breast.

Curclago orchoides Gaertn. (Liliaceae)
'Kalimusli':

Paste of roots with mustard seed is administered to nursing women to increase lactation after delivery.

Daucus carota Linn. (Apiaceae) 'Gazari':

Leaf extract is given for abortion and antifertility.

Euphorbia hirta Linn. (Euphorbiaceae):

A Juice of leaves with milk is given in gonorrhoea.

Ficus religiosa Linn. (Moraceae) 'Peepal':

Bark decoction is given in gonorrhoea.

Foeniculum vulgare Mill. (Apiaceae) 'Saunph':

Leaves are useful in various diseases and also promote female's regularity of monthly course.

Glycosmis pentaphylla (Retz) DC
(Rutaceae) 'Rasgundi':

The root paste with water is applied externally 2 – 3 times daily to women in post delivery pains.

Gnaphalium luteoalbum Linn.
(Asteraceae):

Whole plant is pasted and applied on the breast for lactation in women after delivery.

Grewia asiatica Linn (Tiliaceae) 'Phalsa':

Leaf decoction is used for checking pregnancy.

Hygrophila auriculata (Schum.) Heine
(Acanthaceae) :

Seeds are useful in venereal diseases.

Memordica dioica Roxb. (Cucurbitaceae)
'Karela' :

Root paste is applied to swollen breast after delivery.

Michelia champaca Linn. (Magnoliaceae)
'Champa' :

Bark is employed as an abortifacient for two to three months old pregnancy. Root mixed with black peppers is given after menstruation for 3 days.

Peganum harmala Linn. (Rutaceae)
'Harmal' :

Dried seeds are considered useful in complaints of difficult and painful menstruation.

Pergularia daemia (Forsk). Chiov
(Asclepiadaceae) :

The juice of the leaves is given as a uterine tonic, and it is also useful in checking excessive bleeding.

Phyllanthus fraternus Webster
(Euphorbiaceae) 'Jaramala' :

Juice of the plant is given in gonorrhoea and other genitourinary diseases.

Phoenix acaulis Roxb. Ex. Buch. Ham.
(Palmaceae) 'Khajur' :

Roasted rhizome is given to women after delivery for stomach disorders.

Plumbago indica Linn. (Plumbaginaceae) :

Root is made into paste along with the root of *Michelia champaca* and given once, daily morning for three days to induce abortion of three to four or even up to six months old pregnancy.

Sida cordifolia Linn (Malvaceae) 'Mamos' :

The powder of root bark with milk and sugar is given in various diseases of women such as leucorrhoea, gonorrhoea and spermatorrhoea.

Solanum xanthocarpum Schard & Wendl
(Solanaceae) 'Bhatkatiya' :

All parts of the plant are prescribed in gonorrhoea and pain in chest.

Tephrosia purpurea Pers.
(Caesalpiniaceae) 'Anjan Lokhariya' :

A decoction of dried plant is given in diseases like gonorrhoea.

Trichosanthes dioica Roxb.
(Cucurbitaceae) 'Parwal' :

Fruit powder is used as a remedy for spermatorrhoea.

Withania somnifera Dunal (Solanaceae) 'Asganth' :

Root is very efficacious for toning up ulcerus of women who habitually miscarry. It is also used for easy abortion. The berries and seeds are given in chest complaints.

Woodfordia fruticosa (Linn.) Kurtz.
(Lythraceae) 'Dhia' :

Decoction of 5 – 6 flowers in nausea and aversion, to food during pregnancy.
per dose is given with honey for 3 – 4 days

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