

FOLKLORIC USES OF *MEMECYCLON MALABARICUM* (C.B.CL.). COGN.

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ABSTRACT: *By personal observation and on consultation with large numbers of local folks with some interest and experiences, local popular healers, ayurvedic physicians the folkloric uses of a popular medicinal plant Memecyclon Malabaricum are discussed here.*

While carrying out the project of “Survey of Medicinal Plants of South Kanara”, *Memecyclon malabaricum* (C.B.Cl) Cogn. (Family : Melastomaceae)¹, a hitherto untapped medicinal plant was taken up for detailed scientific evaluation².

M. Malabaricum commonly called as ‘Volle kudi’ in Kanarese, grows in abundance wildly in South Kanara. Local folks and ayurvedic physicians of South Kanara and nearby districts of Karnataka have been using this plant mainly in the treatment of herpes and also as a bitter tonic and anthelmintic.

‘Volle kudi’ means good tender leaves. The tender leaves of this plant which are extremely bitter, are also being sold in open sandy markets. Eventhough they are used for different purposes and in different combinations with other crude drugs, the main component is ‘Volle kudi’ only.

The village folks very commonly gives the fresh juice of the tender leaves to their children at regular intervals (once or twice a month), early morning on empty stomach as

a bitter tonic believe it to be an anthelmintic too.

However, the important use of this plant is in the treatment of herpes. One of the local veteren healers treats the herpes patients in the following manner:-

1. Tender leaves are ground with fresh cold milk and applied 5 – 6 times daily.
2. 5 or 6 tender leaves are ground in milk along with caraway fruits and taken ½ ounce thrice a day.
3. Roots of – *Indigofera*, *Aristolochia indica*, *Salacia*, *hippocastanum*, *Coccinia Indica*, fresh turmeric and fresh vaj are ground in lime juice or with tender coconut pericarp aquash and this paste is applied 5-6 times daily.
4. Cow’s butter is to be applied 3-4 times a day.
5. Two or three tender coconuts are to be taken per day.
6. Enchanted water is also poured.

With this he says, even the chronic cases of herpes can be cured within 3 weeks.

Another popular Ayurvedic practitioner enlists the following uses of 'Volle kudi':

1. Tender leaves are used in urticaria and eczema.
2. In ayurveda 'Volle kudi' is considered as pithahara. The leaves taken with water stops vomiting due to pitha.
3. Volle kudi is also used in female sterility cases.
4. A paste prepared from Volle kudi, Rauwolfia roots, rakta chandan (Pterocarpus santalinus Linn, Family : Laguminosae) along with tender coconut pericarp is applied externally and also taken internally.

A school teacher but more popular as a healer, in treating herpes and other ailments uses Volle kudi in his preparations. According to his these leaves are also used as a blood purifier. A decoction prepared out of the tender leaves of Volle kudi, garlic, omum, pepper and hale kette (bark of *Alstonia scholaris*, Family: Apocynaceae) is given twice a month (on amavasya and poornima days) internally for worm infection.

Tender or mature leaves of Volle kudi along with caraway fruits, cow's milk or preferably cow's urine are ground to a syrupy paste and taken internally twice a day depending on the severity of herpes and also applied externally any number of times.

A paste of the roots of *M.malabaricum* with lime juice is also applied to boils or wounds.

It is interesting to note his revelations of some age old belief on herpes. Though it is a known fact that herpes is caused by virus, to the question who are all prone to such vital attack he explains: 1. it is some thing to do with cobra, hence common kannada name 'Sarpa suthu'. 2. if the path of cobra movements is trespassed by i) hot ash ii) a particular variety of banana plantation, iii) dirt iv) menstruating women v) disturbance of their living places vi) incomplete vows etc. He supports these beliefs with living examples and number of photographs of his treatment of patients.

Interview with many other local folks supported the view that 'Volle kudi' is very commonly used in herpes.

The plant has been subjected to pharmacognostical, preliminary phytochemical, pharmacological and clinical evaluation (2). However, isolation of the active principles responsible for the various uses of this plant and the actual compound responsible for curing the herpes if clinically proved, will be great contributions to the medical world.

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