

## FOLK MEDICINE OF RAYALASEEMA REGION, ANDHRA PRADESH: I DENTAL PROTECTORS

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**Received: 17 December,1994**

**Accepted: 2 February, 1995**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The paper deals with the folklore use of twentyone plant species occurring in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh for curing dental ailments.*

### INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1900s, varying degrees of attention have been given to the significance of dental infection for the well-being of the entire body. At present dental infection as a source of the spread of micro-organism to other critical sites in the body is considered to be serious threat to the health of certain high-risk patients. Tooth extraction was seen as a remedy for rheumatism. By the 1930s the understanding and treatment of dental diseases has improved considerably. The dental diseases were most often treated with herbs and herbomineral drugs. In India from ancient times, the herbalists treated the gums and infectious diseases with indigenous herbs which were free from side effects. Many herbalists keep this information as their family secret.

The effort towards prevention and cure from disease is known as therapy. It is natural instinct to protect oneself from disease or disorder. Therefore, it is but natural that tribal and village-folk cure themselves of different kinds of diseases by long experience. Their knowledge is mostly collective wisdom based on trial and error method coming down from generation to generation.

The present attempt is therefore a thorough survey for information on the treatment prevailing in tribal and non-tribal to enrich the traditional systems and to document the prescriptions which are not listed so far in Rayalseem region.

The topographical information, ethnographic characteristics of local tribes and flora of the Rayalaseema have been described (Nagaraju and Rao, 1989, 1990; Nagaraju, 1992). The information on medicinal plants presented here was not recorded in well-known literature (Anonymous 1948 – 1976; Chopra et al., 1956, 1969; Jain 1962; Jain et al., 1973; Kirtikar and Basu, 1975; Nadkarni, 1976; Nagaraju and Rao, 1990; Nagaraju, 1992).

### METHODOLOGY

During 1992 – 1994, frequent trips were conducted to different parts of Rayalaseema. Information from tribal and non-tribal people on 21 plant species which are frequently used in dental disorders or diseases was recorded according to the

methods described by Jain and Rao (1983), Nagaraju and Rao (1989, 1990).

## ENUMERATION OF DENTAL PROTECTIVE PLANTS

Abbreviations used:

Ln = Local name

L = Locality

SGA EBH = S.G.S. College Ethnobotanical Herbarium.

1. *Acacia nilotica* (L.) Willd. ex Del. ssp. Indica (Benth.) Brenan (Mimosaceae).

Ln: *Nalla Thumma* L: Tirumala (SGS EBH:79)

Stembark is boiled in alum water and given to rinse the oral cavity in toothaches and sore throat.

2. *Acalyha indica* L. (Euphorbiaceae)

Ln: *Muripinda* L: Puttur (SGS EBH:64)

Leaf juice is used to rinse oral cavity to cure aphthous ulcers.

3. *Achyranthes aspera* L. (Amaranthaceae)

Ln: *Uttarnei* L: Cuddapah (SGS EBH: 107)

Root powder with a bit of alum is used for washing teeth to cure pyorrhea.

4. *Aerva lanata* (L.) Juss. ex Schultes (Amaranthaceae)

Ln: *Thelagapindi* L: Tirupati (SGS EBH:21)

Fruit powder suspended in lukewarm water is used to rinse oral cavity for the treatment of pyorrhea.

5. *Amaranthus spinosus* L. (Amaranthaceae)

Ln: *Mullathotakura* L: Chandragiri (SGS EBH:306)

Leaf paste is kept on the teeth to cure pyorrhea and dental caries.

6. *Annona squamosa* L: (Annonaceae)

Ln: *Seethapalamu* Rayachoty (SGS EBH : 170)

Maceration of leaf is given to cure pyorrhea and dental caries.

7. *Calophyllum ionophyllum* L. (Guttiferae)

Ln: *Ponna Chettu* L: Nagari (SGS EBH: 246)

Dried fruit is fried and powdered by adding a pinch of salt. This is applied to the gums and used in brushing the teeth.

8. *Calotropis gigantean* (L.) R. Br. (Asclepiadaceae)

Ln: *Tella Jelledu* L: Madanapalli (SGS EBH:120)

Cotton is dipped in the latex and kept on the aching teeth.

9. *Carissa spinarum* L. (Apocynaceae)

Ln: *Kalekai / Kalimi* L: Kadiri (SGS EBH:66)

Seeds wrapped in the leaves are smoked to get relief from acute tooth-pain.

10. *Cleome viscosa* L. (Cleomaceae)

Ln: *Kukka vaminta* L: Kurnool (SGS EBH : 18)

Leaf juice is used to rinse oral cavity for the treatment of dental caries.

11. *Ferula assafoetida* L. (Umbelliferae)

Ln: *Inguva* L: Madanapalli (SGS EBH: 252)

A small bit of resin is applied on the teeth to get relief from severe tooth-aches.

12. *Hemidesmus indicus* (L.) R.Br. (Periplocaceae)

Ln: *Sugandha pala* L: Tsundapalli (SGS EBH:101)

The root is mixed with *Adiantum caudatum* and *Cassia auriculata* roots and burnt and the ash that results is applied to the carious teeth.

13. *Maytenus emarginata* (Wild.) Ding Hou (Celastraceae)

Ln: *Danti/Goddeti Chippa* L: Rajampet (SGS EBH:33)

The stem decoction is prepared by mixing with fruits of *Solanum surattense* in equal proportions. The teeth are washed with the above decoction frequently to get relief from tooth-aches.

14. *Naravelia zeylanica* (L.) DC (Ranunculaceae)

Ln: *Pedda-gowri-kuntala* L: Kodur (SGS EBH: 46)

Stems are used as tooth-brushes to cure tooth-aches.

15. *Plumbago zeylanica* L. (Plumbaginaceae).

Ln: *Chitramulamu* L: Chitoor (SGS EBH:36)

Leaf and root paste are kept on the carious teeth to kill worms.

16. *Pongamia pinnata* (L.) (Papilionaceae)

Ln: *Kanuga* L: Nandyal (SGS EBH: 82)

Stem squash is placed on the infected teeth to get relief. This is continued until the pain subsides.

17. *Psidium guajava* L. (Myrtaceae)

Ln: *Jama Chettu* L; Srisailam (SGS EBH:61)

Leaf decoction is used to rinse oral cavity for the treatment of dental caries.

18. *Ricinus communis* L. (Euphorbiaceae )

Ln: *Amudamu* L: Allagadda (SGS EBH:99)

Latex from the plant is applied to cure gums.

19. *Secamone emetica* (Retz.) R.Br. ex. Schutes (Asclepiadaceae)

Ln: *Kondapala* L: Hindupur (SGS EBH:77)

Fruits are boiled and powdered with a pinch of table salt and applied to cure tooth aches and dental caries.

20. *Solanum surattense* Burm. f. (Solanaceae)

Ln: *Nelamulga* L: Tirumala (SGS EBH:127)

The whole plant is powdered and mixed with turmeric powder and used for washing the teeth to relieve acute tooth-aches.

21. *Tridax procumbens* L. (Asteraceae)

Ln: *Gaddi Chamanthi* L: Piler (SGS EBH:265)

Squeezed leaves are mixed with camphor and kept on the carious teeth.

## DISCUSSION

The wealth of knowledge on medicinal plants among the tribal of Rayalaseema appears to have been developed through their age-old trial and error methods and transmitted orally from generation to generation. The foregoing enumeration presents an account of 21 plant species used in the treatment of dental disease by the local folk.

The deficiency of Vitamin C causes weakness, bleeding gums, loosening and

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falling of teeth, pains etc. Certain micro-organisms may also spread the infections in the mouth. The plants might possess anti-bacterial, anti-fungal properties and may contain potent active principles which might be equivalent to Vitamin C in controlling the dental infections. Thus the investigation throws light on the popularity of herbal medicine among the general public and might draw the attention of phytochemists and pharmacologists for further scientific study.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors express their thanks to those tribal and non-tribal herbalists who wholeheartedly co-operated in sharing their knowledge and in the collection of the plant materials for this study. They are also thankful to Dr. Balraj Maharshi, Adviser to Ayurveda, Government of Andhra Pradesh (India) for encouragement during the field studies.

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