

FOLK MEDICINE OF THE IRULAS OF COIMBATORE FORESTS

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ABSTRACT: *This paper presents an account of 25 species used by the Irulas of Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu, as medicinal plants. In addition to scientific name and uses, local name are also given, Medicinal plants and uses hitherto unreported for this tribe alone are given in this paper.*

Introduction

Ethnobotany of Irula tribe has been studied by several authors (Abraham, 1981; Lakshmanan and sankaranarayanan, 1988; Sankaramarayanan 1988; Kalyani et al 1986; Ramachandran & Maniyan 1989; Lakshmanan and sankaranarayanan, 1990; Ravishankar et al 1994; Ramachandran 1996; and Bal Subramanian and Prasad, 1996). In spite of the above studies, information about medicinal uses of plants is meager and the present study has enabled further contribution to the knowledge about medicinal plants in the life of Irulas. The study was conducted at Gopanari and Nellithurai reserve forests of Coimbatore division. The forests are of mixed dry deciduous type and the river Bhavani flows through this forest, harbouring extensive gallery forests.

Materials and Methods

A number of field surveys were conducted in some of the Irula tribal villages viz., Korappathy, Getthaikkadu, Maanar, sithukuni, sethumadai, Keezh Mulli, Keezh pillur and paralikkadu in coimbatore Forest Division between November 1993 and August 1994. Elderly tribal people were interviewed; details on the uses of plants for

medicinal purpose were recorded. The plants were identified using standard floras (Gamble, 1936) and confirmed at the botanical survey of India, Coimbatore. The voucher herbarium specimens of plants are deposited in the herbarium specimens of plants are deposited in the herbarium of the salim Ali centre for ornithology and natural History. The uses of plant specimens collected are compared with the previous records for their medicinal value. Twenty five species and uses hitherto not reported for Iruals alone are given below. Of the twenty five species reported, there are trees, five are shrubs, seven are climbers and ten are herbs. The uses of medicinal plants range from treating scorpion bites to controlling tumours.

Enumeration of the species

In the following enumeration, 25 medicinal plant species are arranged alphabetically. Specific epithet is followed by family name, their local name (Tamil) and uses.

Ailanthus excelsa Roxb. (Simaroubaceae)

Locame Name : Peevari

Uses : Bark pounded with water applied externally and also administered with feed to control fever in cattle.

Andrographis paniculata (Burm.f.) Wall (Acanthaceae)

Locame Name : Pacchilai
Uses : to relieve body pain, a body wash given with a decoction of leaves.

Argyreia Pomacea (Roxb.) Choisy (Convolvulaceae)

Locame Name : Mustai
Uses : Roots consumed for one week for jaundice

Barleria mysorensis Heyne ex roth. (Acanthaceae)

Locame Name : Malansulli
Uses : Leaf paste is applied locally as an antidote for scorpion bite

Borreria hispida (L.) K. Schum. (Rubiaceae)

Locame Name : Peezhi
Uses : Root paste applied locally as an antidote for scorpion bite

Borreria ocymoides (Burm. F) DC. (Rubiaceae)

Locame Name : Peeli
Uses : Leaves together with those of euphorbia hirta are pounded, mixed with cow's milk and orally administered to enhance and production in lactation mother.

Cardiospermum halicacabum L (Sapindaceae)

Locame Name : Modakkathan

Uses : Leaf paste is applied all over the body and later hot water wash is given to study vomiting and giddiness

Carmona retusa (Vahl) Mesumune (Boraginaceae)

Locame Name : Muttan, Kozhivethilai
Uses : Leaf paste is orally administered for two times in a day to control menstrual disorders.

Cascabela thevetia (L.) Lippold (apocynaceae)

Locame Name : Thangaarali
Uses : Fruit paste applied all over the body in the evening and bath is given in the following day morning consequently for three days to treat venereal disease.

Centella asiatica Urb. (Apiaceae)

Locame Name : Kuthirai Kulambu
Uses : Leaves are fried in the groundnut oil and eaten to reduce excessive body heat.

Chloroxylon swietenia DC. (Flindersiaceae)

Locame Name : Porosa maram
Uses : Stem given to pregnant mother's hand to reduce labour pain

Cissus vitiginea L. (Vitaceae)

Locame Name : Kundupirandai
Uses : Whole plant paste applied all over the body to control excessive swellings all over the body.

Croton bonplandianum Bail. (Euphorbiaceae)

Locame Name : Rail pachilai

Uses : Leaves along with Brassica nigrum seeds ground into a paste and applied on the forehead for head ache.

Cyclea peltata (Lam.) Hook.f. & Thoms. (Menispermaceae)

Locame Name : Mulvelikizhangu

Uses : Tuber boiled and taken internally to increase body immunity.

Dioscorea pentaphylla L. (Dioscoreaceae)

Local Name : Mulvelikizhangu

Uses : Tuber boiled and taken internally to increase body immunity.

Glycosmis arborea (Roxb) DC. (Rutaceae)

Locame Name : Mulaikuluki

Uses : Root paste is applied externally over the breast for three to five days to treat tumour.

Hibiscus ovalifolius (Forsk.) Vahl (Malvaceae)

Locame Name : Pullaithekku

Uses : Leaf Juice (One teaspoon) is taken internally as refrigerant.

Hugonia mystax L. (Linaceae)

Locame Name : Sudalithalai, Mothirakanni

Uses : Root paste taken internally, two teaspoon per day for two days, to arrest days entry.

Hybanthus ennaespermus (L) F.V Muell. (Violaceae)

Locame Name : Chinna kongu poo.

Uses : leaf and root paste applied all over the body and bath is taken after

three to five hours to reduce excessive body heat and fever in children.

Ipomoea staphylina Roem. & Schult. (Convolvulaceae)

Locame Name : Oonan Kodi

Uses : Root ground into a paste and applied locally to the affected parts as an anti dote for snake-bite.

Malvastrum coromandelianum (L.) Garcke (Malvaceae)

Locame Name : Kalakarandai

Uses : Leaves, roots together with leaves of sida acuta are ground into a paste and applied externally for three times to cure blisters.

Ocimum gratissimum (Lamiaceae)

Locame Name : Rajathulasi

Uses : leaf Juice taken orally as refrigerant

Oldenlandia umbellata L. (Rubiaceae)

Locame Name : Kurunthulachi

Uses : Whole plant along with Cuminum Cyminum seeds ground into a paste and taken internally in the early morning for two days for menstrual disorders.

Phyllanthus virgatus forst (Euphorbiaceae)

Locame Name : Siru Nelli

Uses : Leaf paste is taken internally for three days to reduce excessive body heat. Leaf paste is taken goat's milk for two weeks to cure Jaundice.

Plumbago zeylanica L. (Plumbaginaceae)

Locame Name : Pachathalai

Uses : Root paste applied externally for two days to treat blisters

Leaf paste is applied to children's head for ten minutes for control of headache and fever.

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