

## **Ethno Medical Knowledge of Plants Used By Irula Tribes, Chengal Combai, the Nilgiris, Tamilnadu**

**M.MURUGESAN, V.BALASUBRAMANIAM AND H.ARTHI**

Department of Botany, Kongunadu Arts and Science college, Coimbatore-29

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### **ABSTRACT:**

A total of 22 species of plants used by Irula community people are described based on ethnomedical field survey. These plants belong to 17 families and are used to treat a wide range of discomforts like cough, cold, body ache, earache, stomachache, headache, diarrhea, snake bite, rheumatism etc. the botanical names, followed by their local names have also been given.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In India, a tropical country with rich biological and cultural diversity, there are about 67.37 million tribal people belonging to 573 tribal groups living in different geographic locations with various subsistence patterns. It is estimated that the predominant tribal areas comprise about 15% of the total geographical area of our country. These tribal groups living in biodiversity rich areas possess a wealth of knowledge on the utilization and conservation of food and medicinal plants. This knowledge has been passed on from one generation to another without any written document, and also it has helped them to have sense of responsibility in judicious utilization of the plant resources and also to conserve. Moreover, it is an undeniable fact that the knowledge of indigenous people is invaluable in the present day context of biological diversity conservation and its sustainable utilization.

The present paper is the results of ethnobotanical information gathered from the unexplored Irulas tribal pocket of

Chengal combai, Coonoor Taluka, the Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The Ethnobotanical surveys were carried out during the period of 2002-2003 for documentation of ethnobotanical information and collection of plant material. Documentation consists of interviews with local elder medicine men, head man and vaid, based on the method given by Jain<sup>6</sup>. Ethnobotanical information was noted on data sheets and in the field books. Local medicine men accompanied for the collection of plant material. Herbarium specimen were deposited at the Herbarium of Kongunadu Arts and science College, (KASCH) coimbatore -29. The plants are arranged alphabetically with family, local name and mode of administration.

### **DISCUSSION**

Present ethnobotanical explorations conducted at Irula tribal settlements in forest areas of chengal combai, coonoor, the

Nilgiris, resulted in the information about traditional medicinal uses of 22 plant species belonging to 22 genera and 17 families. The medicinal preparations are used in various forms, viz plant extract, decoction, paste and juice based on experience of the tribals for individual plant. The majority of the medicines are prepared as paste and applied either externally or internally depending on condition and requirement of patient. Among the enlisted medicinal plants majority of species are from families of Rutaceae and Apiceae Medicinal plants become endangered only when exploited beyond certain limits. But the tribals in the study area are known to live in harmony with nature since centuries utilizing the available medicinal plant resources and without causing ecological disturbances.

## RESULTS

### MENISPERMACEAE

*Cyclea peltata* (Lam.) Hook.f.,

Local name: Sethari Kodi Uses: Leaf juice administered orally to get relief from cough, cold and body pain.

### CAPPARIDACEAE

*Celome monophylla* L.,

Local name: Kadugu sedi

Uses: Leaf juice added as drops into the ear to cure earache.

### MALVACEAE

*Malvatum coromandelianum* (L) Garke,

Local name: Kalakenikai

Uses: Roots grind with water and administered orally for stomach pain.

### OXALIDACEAE

*Oxalis corniculata* L.,

Local name: Puliyankeerai

Uses: Leaf paste mixed with water and taken orally to cure vomiting and headache.

### RUTACEAE

*Glycosmis mauritiana* (Lam.) Yaich.,

Local name: Panasedi

Uses: Leaves and barks were crushed and applied on forehead to cure severe headache.

*Naringi crenulata* (Roxb) Nicolson,

Local name: Naivalampattai

Uses: Strange belief among the tribes is if the bark is crushed with water or milk and drink it will protect them from all types of diseases.

*Ruta graveolens* L.,

Local name: Arubathansedi

Uses: Leaf paste applied externally in children's stomach to cure diarrhea, stomach pain and vomiting.

### MELIACEAE

*Cipadessa baccifera* (Roth.) Miq.,

Local name: Marundha soppu Uses: Leaf paste is used as curative in chronic rheumatism

### SAPINDACEAE

*Dodonaea angustifolia* L.f.,

Local name: Marundha soppu

Uses: Leaves were boiled with sesame oil and applied externally to get relief from rheumatic pains.

### CAESALPINIACEA

*Caesalpinia bonduc* (L) Roxb.,

Local name: porumaielai

Uses: Root juice taken orally to get relief from gastric disorders. Seeds are grind with sesame oil and taken orally to increase body weight.

### APLACEAE

*Centella asiatica* (L) Urban,

Local name: Kutheraikokku

Uses: Crushed leaves mixed with sugar candy and taken as a digestive agent and also regulate the blood circulation.

*Buplerum wightii* P.K. Mukherjee,  
Local name: Malai seragam  
Uses: Root and leaf juice administered  
Orally for timely and easy delivery.

*Heracleum ceylanicum* Gardner ex C.B.  
Clarke,

Local name: Poonaikal sedi  
Uses: leaves and young stems crushed with  
sesame oil and used against insect allergy.

### **RUBIACEAE**

*Rubia cordifolia* L.,  
Local name: Periya nangai.  
Uses: Leaf juice administered orally to cure  
cough, cold and nervous disorders.

### **ASTERACEAE**

*Adenostemma lavenia* (L.) Kuntze,  
Local name: Kasirukai  
Uses: Fresh leaves boiled with water and the  
paste is applied externally on the body to  
cure skin diseases.

*Artemisia parviflora* Buch – ham. Ex Roxb.,  
Local name: Railpundu  
Uses: Leaf past applied on forehead to get  
relief from headache.

### **PLUMBAGINACEAE**

*Plumbago zeylanica* L.,  
Local name: Cithiramalliver.  
Uses: Roots ground with water and applied  
over the body against insect bite.

### **LAMIACEAE**

*Plectranthus malabaricus* (Benth.) R.H.  
Willemse,  
Local name: Ellamabai  
Uses: Leaf juice administered orally for  
smooth functioning of heart. It will also  
prevent heart attack.

### **ARISTOLOCHIACEAE**

*Aristolochia tagala* Cham.,  
Local name: Modhalaikodi.  
Uses: Leaves and tender stem were ground  
and administered orally to cure diarrhea and  
vomiting.

### **SANTALACEAE**

*Thesium wightianum* Wall. ex Wight,  
Local name: Anaikchi  
Uses: Whole plant was kept in a cloth and  
tied on the cheek to prevent bulging.

### **HYPOXIDACEAE**

*Curculigo orchioides* Gaertn.,  
Local name: Nelapanai  
Uses: Juice of rhizome used as an antidote  
for snake bite.

### **COLCHICACEAE**

*Gloriosa superba* L.,  
Local name: Kodanki kizhangu.  
Uses: Tubers ground and made into pills and  
used as sleeping tablet but heavy dose will  
cause death.

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