

**GLIMPSES OF FOLK MEDICINES OF DHARMAPURI
FOREST DIVISION TAMILNADU**

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Received: February 13, 1985

Accepted: June 20, 1985

ABSTRACT: *Folklore medicines of certain hilly parts of Dharmapuri District of Tamil Nadu are brought out in this paper, based on a recent survey of the area by the authors. Some of the incantation techniques used for snake bites are also highlighted.*

INTRODUCTION

Nature products from the bowls of the earth, a great number of plants having medicinal value, that grow abundantly in and around our lands and used by millions of people in India in their daily use from time immemorial. An attempt is made in this paper to communicate the properties of some of the wild plants used as medicines. The techniques of incantation (Recitation of mantras) believed to have been used for insect and snake bites by the forest dwellers of Dharmapuri forest division are also brought out for further clinical studies.

Location

Dharmapuri is a north – west border district of Tamil Nadu lying south of Karnataka State. Arur is a forest range of Dharmapuri district of which Chittery is one of the hill ranges. Arur is situated at about 37 kilometers towards east from Dharmapuri junction and lies between the latitude of 12° – 3' north and longitude of 78° – 30' east.

Life of the People

The people of this locality are generally poor. Their earning from the land are supplemented by the wages they get by working for the forest department. All of them are Hindus by religion. Most of them are illiterate due to poor educational facilities. Their staple food consists of Cholan, Ragi, Varagu or Samai supplemented by some vegetable curry. Rice is a luxury restricted to festivals and nuptial feasts.

Folklore medicines

The list of folklore is shown below in the following order. Botanical name, (Family name), Local name, (Sanskrit name), use, mode of administration and dose.

1. *Acacia arabica* Willd (Leguminosae)
Karuvellam (Babbula) used for Asthma.
The juice of the inner bark of this tree is given in small doses daily for few days.
2. *Acacia arabica* Willd (Leguminosae)
Karuvellam (Babbula) used for sore eye.

The tender leaf is made into a paste with goat's milk and applied on the soles and bandaged for two days.

3. *Acacia leucophloea* Willd (Leguminosae) Velvelam (Shvetabarburā) used for Traumatic ulcer. The bark of this tree is crushed and applied in bandage over the traumatic ulcer.

Note : The speciality of this medicine is that even if the ulcer gets moistured by water, the curing process will not get retarded and no pus gets formed.

4. *Anogeissus latifolia* Wall (Combretaceae) Vellanangu (Dhava) used for abdominal colic. The fresh bark is chewed, the juice is swallowed and the residue is spat out.

5. *Artemisia vulgaris* Linn (Compositae) Pachai-paththiri or Machi-paththiri (Nagadomai) used for peptic ulcer. The leaf of this plant is pounded and the juice is extracted. Administer the juice with palm jaggery.

6. i. *Bauhinia Purpurea* Linn. (Leguminosae) Vellaimantharai (Vanaraja).

ii. *Jatropha curcas* Linn. (Euphorbiaceae) Kattamanakku (Kanaeranda) used for jaundice. The leaf of vellaimanthara is made into a paste with the milk of kattamanakku and administered.

7. *Capparis sepiaria* Linn. (Capparidaceae) Karunjurai (Kakadani) used for snake bite. The seeds of this plant is powdered and administered.

Note : The above seeds look – like cumin seeds in shape. The seeds are collected only

during the Tamil month of 'Thai' between 15th January and 15th February.

8. *Cassia occidentalis* Linn. (Leguminosae) Ponthagarai (Kosamarda). Used for bone fracture. The leaf is made into a paste with egg albumen and the flour of black gram and applied with suitable bandaid.

9. *Cassia obovata* Colla (Leguminosae) Nattu Nilavagari (Bhutralapota). Used for leucoderma. The powder of the root of this plant is given once daily for 90 days.

10. *Chloroxylon swietenia* DC (Rutaceae) Porasu. Used for inflammation. The leaf of the plant is made into a paste in the medium of butter milk and applied over the inflammation.

11. *Cipadessa baccifera* Miq. (Meliaceae) Pulipanchadi. Used for Kadanthal sting (Vandukadi) (A type of wasp). The paste of the leaf is given mixed with goat's milk.

12. *Clausena willdenovii* W . & A. (Rutaceae) Anathazhai used for injury of the eye caused by sticks. Crushed leaves of the plant are packed in a piece of cloth and the juice is squeezed out and applied to the injured eyes.

13. *Cleistanthus collinus* Benth (Euphorbiaceae). Oduganthalai used for committing suicide. This is a poisonous plant. The leaf paste of this plant when taken internally causes unconsciousness. Death occurs if the decoction of the leaves is consumed. The plant is said to contain sub – chloride of Mercury.

Antidote for the above poison

Pandanus odoratissimus Roxb. (Pandaceae) Thazhai (Ketaka). The root of Thazhai is made into a paste and administered to the victim, which creates immediate vomiting and diarrhoea and the effect of the poison is eliminated.

14. *Cryptolepis buchanani* R. & S (Asclepiadaceae) Oananthadu or Palkodi (Krsnasariva) : Used for fissured soles of the feet. The latex of this plant is applied over the affected parts.

15. *Elytraria acaulis* Lind. (Acanthaceae) Nilakadambu. Used for otalgia. In cases of ear ache accompanied with discharge of pus, a few drops of the leaf juice is poured in the affected ear.

16. *Erythrina indica* Lam. (Leguminosae) Karumunnakku or Dhavasumurunkai (Paribhedhe) used for the ulcer. The paste of the leaf is applied over the ulcer.

17. *Erythroxyton monogynum* Roxb. (Linaceae) Kattuchandanam used for weeping Eczema. Prepare the thailam (oil) from the hard wood of this tree. This thailam is applied externally over the eczema. This thailam is locally called 'Chempulichan thailam'

18. *Ficus retusa* Linn. (Moraceae) Kallathi (Kuni). Used for bone fracture. The tender leaf of the plant is ground with Seasmum oil to the consistency of a paste and applied as bandage over the bone fracture.

19. *Holoptelea integrifolia* Plach (Ulmaceae) Oilmarapattai (Chirabilva). Used for Traumatic ulcer. The bark of this tree is crushed and applied as

bandage over the ulcer. Daily once for three days.

20. *Lantana aculeata* Linn. (Verbenaceae) Unnaelai. Used for cut injury. The leaf of the plant is made into a paste by grinding with lime and applied over the ulcer.

21. *Melia azedarach* Linn. (Meliaceae) Malaivembu or Dhulukkanu vembu (Mahanimba). Used to remove sterility in females. The leaf juice of this tree is given orally for three days, commencing from the first day of menses. The procedure is repeated for three consecutive cycles.

22. *Mollugo nudicaulis* Lam. (Aizoaceae) Mathvampundu. Used for intertrigo. The leaf of this plant is made into a paste in the medium of butter and applied over the ulcers.

23. *Secamone emetica* R. Br. (Asclepiadaceae) Perumkurunja. Used for abscess. When the leaf juice is applied the abscess gets opened. Again the juice is applied over the abscess for healing.

24. *Withania somnifera* Dun (Solanaceae) Amukkarakizhangu (Ashvahanika) and *Crinum asiaticum* Linn. (Amaryllidaceae) Vishamunkil (Nagadanan). Used for pubo. The paste of *Withania somnifera* and paste of the leaf of Vishamunkil are also applied.

Incantations and other techniques for snake bites.

Technique No. 1

The person bitten by a snake immediately places a stone on his head. This prevents

spreading of the poison to other parts of body from the spot of bite. The victim then immediately goes to the physician throws down the stone after reciting a mantra (the mantra is not furnished here since it is in Tamil and not to admit of translation). The powder of the herb *Clitrullus colocynthis* (Perumthumatti) is administered to make the victim vomit. After that the root of *Cynodon dactylon* (Arugampul) is grounded into a paste and applied over the bitten part.

Technique No. 2

Unripped fruit of *Carica papaya* is taken and the skin is removed by slicing. Salt is then rubbed over it. The fruit is then placed over the bite with sliced portions in contact with the bite and bandaged. The poison gets removed.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper folklore medicines of Chittery hills and Kottapatti village of Dharmapuri district of Tamil Nadu are narrated, giving the Botanical, local and Sanskrit names, method of preparation and clinical applications. Some of the drugs namely Chempulichan Thailam of Kattu

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Chandanam* (*Erythroxylon monogynum* Roxb) for the treatment of weeping eczema* the root powder of Nattu Nilavagai** (*Cassia obovata* Coll.) for the treatment of leucoderma, the use of the juice of Malaivembu*** (*Melia azedarach* Linn), to remove sterility in women are remarkably having good popularity even in other parts of the country. Scientific preparation of the drugs and clinical research for bringing out their therapeutic potential is suggested to popularise them for the benefit of the masses. Techniques for the treatment of snake bites as adopted by the forest dwellers are also furnished. Further clinical studies of the herbs are of vital importance for exploring their utility, effectiveness and worth in combating common diseases.

* Item No. 17 , ** Item No. 9 , *** Item No. 21

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors wish to express their thanks to the Director, Central Council for Research in Ayurveda and Siddha, New Delhi and the Project Officer, Survey of Medicinal Plants Unit, Palayamkottai for the financial support and facilities provided in this work.