

Traditional therapeutic usage of wild flowers by Bhils of Ratlam district, Madhya Pradesh, India

DINESH JADHAV

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ABSTRACT

Plants used by tribals in flower therapy have been enumerated. Flower therapy is an old practice among the tribals in Ratlam district of Madhya Pradesh. In this therapy locally available plant species are used for the prevention and cure of the diseases. The tribals were contacted and the information on 18 species belonging to 16 genera under 14 families from different pockets is documented here.

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INTRODUCTION

Man has been depended on plants for healthcare from times immemorial. The human life and culture has directly or indirectly been influenced by their surrounding environment. Aborigines possess profound knowledge about the properties and uses of plants inhabiting their surroundings. They have inherited rich traditional knowledge of surrounding plants used as food, fodder, fibre, wood, fuel, medicine, beverage, tannin, dye, gum, resin, cosmetic, crafts & religious ceremonies. Some other plants are also used as narcotics, hallucinogens and poison. Such knowledge of economic and other properties of surrounding plants acquired by the tribal community by virtue of their experience and practice has been passed on from generation to generation as a part of their cultural heritage. Ratlam district lying between 23°05'–23°55' N latitude and 74°30' – 75°42' E longitude covers an area of 4861 sq. km. The district is situated on Malwa plateau at 493.62 m. above the sea level. Bhils are the main inhabitants of different villages of the district. According to 2001

census the population of Bhil tribe in the district was 2.26 lakhs constituting about 23.27% of the total population. Ethnobotany has introduced numerous little-known or unknown uses of plants [5, 6, 7, 8]. The author has been engaged in ethnobotanical investigations in this district, results of which have been published earlier [1,2,3]. In the present investigation, the author has recorded new and interesting ethno-medicinal uses of plants found in the habitations of the bhil tribe. During extensive field trips in some tribal pockets in the district, the author recorded multipurpose ethno-medicinal uses of plants. The present paper provides the information on flower therapy traditionally used by Bhil tribe of the district for the treatment of their various ailments. The flowers of the plants are used by the tribal people as an easy and effective method of curing their various ailments. From the survey, it is observed that the flowers of 18 plants species are used by the tribal people effectively to cure their ailments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Ethnobotanical survey was conducted in 52 different tracks in the forest areas of Ratlam district

Department of Botany, Govt. Arts & Science PG College, Ratlam-457001 (M. P.), India, E-mail: dinj2ad@yahoo.com
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and more than 300 ethno medicinal plants were recorded. Ethno medicinal usage of flower part of 18 plant species has been provided in this paper. First hand data regarding various uses and local names of plants were collected through personal contacts established with a large number of tribal informants and "Bhopa" (Traditional rural medicine men). During the survey the 'Bhopa' was contacted and were taken to the field for documenting the information about ethno medicinal plants, local names and method of preparation of the drug and approximate dosage of administration. These data are recorded in the field book. Voucher specimens are collected for authentication of information and future reference. With the help of local names and specimens, it was possible to verify the uses with other villagers and the data are considered valid if at least 2 informants provided similar uses about a medicinal plant. Herbarium specimens were prepared following the standard method [4] and deposited in the herbarium of Botany department, Govt. PG Arts & Science College, Ratlam (MP). Herbarium specimens were identified with the help of standard Floras [9,10,11].

RESULTS

Plant species are arranged alphabetically along with the family in parentheses, followed by local names and voucher specimen numbers. Actual mode of treatment has been given in detail:

Bombax ceiba L. (Bombacaceae), 'Hemlo', DJ-10

Extract of flowers is taken with water to promote conception. It is also useful in leucorrhoea, menorrhoea, stomach pain during menses and to prevent miscarriages. Extract of flowers is taken with water twice a day with empty stomach to check undesirable discharge of semen with urine and to increase sexual potentiality. Powder or extract of flowers is taken with water to cure premature ejaculation.

Butea monosperma (Lamk.) Taub., (Papilionaceae), 'Khankro', DJ-13.

The decoction of flowers is used by ladies for washing the organ in gonorrhoea. Boiled flowers are tied on stomach in the cases of burning in urethra

during micturition. The powder of dried flowers is used as face-pack for the treatment of pimples.

Calotropis gigantea (L.) Ait. f., (Asclepiadaceae), 'Ankro', DJ-69.

A flower is chewed daily early in the morning to cure asthma. 5 flowers of *Calotropis gigantea* and 5-10 cloves of *Syzygium aromaticum* are burnt with cotton fibers (*Gossypium herbaceum*) to prepare ash. About 10g of ash is taken daily early in the morning with glassful of water to cure asthma. Paste of 3 flowers is fried in pure ghee and it is taken with wheat bread "Roti" to cure asthma.

Calotropis procera (Ait.) R.Br., (Asclepiadaceae), 'Ankro', DJ-15.

Two flower are chewed daily early in the morning to cure asthma and Tuberculosis.

Carica papaya L., (Caricaceae), 'Papito', DJ-119.

Two to 3 flowers chewed daily to cure jaundice.

Clerodendrum phlomidis L. f., (Verbenaceae), 'Arni', DJ-019

Extract of flowers is taken with water for the prevention of miscarriages.

Gossypium herbaceum L. (Malvaceae), 'Kapas', DJ-

Fibers are used alongwith flowers of *Calotropis gigantea* and clove buds for asthma as described above.

Hibiscus rosa-sinensis L., (Malvaceae), 'Jasul', DJ-63.

One to two buds are chewed everyday early in the morning for a period of 7 days to cure leucorrhoea and menorrhoea. Extract of flowers is taken with water to cure menorrhoea, leucorrhoea and stomach pain during mensus.

Lantana camara L., (Verbenaceae), 'Baramasi', DJ-96.

Powder of dried flowers is taken with tea twice a day to cure jaundice.

Madhuca indica Gmel. (Sapotaceae), 'Mawdi', DJ-35

Boiled flowers are tied on injured part of body to cure wounds. Poultice of boiled flowers is tied in the case of fracture.

Moringa oleifera Lam. (Moringaceae), 'Surajno', DJ-98

The vegetable curry of flowers is useful in high blood pressure.

Musa paradisiaca L. (Musaceae), 'Kero', DJ-

The extract of spathe is given to cattle in the case of prolapse of uterus.

Nerium indicum Mill. (Apocnaceae), 'Kaner', DJ-074

Extract of flowers is used to promote breast milk of mother.

Opuntia elatior (Willd.) Mill. (Cactaceae), 'Hasla-Thuar'.

Flower is roasted in the burning dried cow dung. After the flower is roasted, it is eaten for 7 days to cure Asthma.

Senna sericea Sw. (Caesalpiniaceae), 'Phuario'. DJ-313

Paste of 6 flowers is eaten with Jaggery for 3 days thrice a day to cure Jaundice.

Senna tora L. (Roxb.), (Caesalpiniaceae), 'Phuario', DJ-72.

Paste of 6 flowers is eaten with jaggery for 3 days thrice a day to cure jaundice. Paste of flowers is tied on boils/cuts as poultice.

Solanum surattense Burm. f. (Solanaceae) 'Bhuri-ringdi', DJ-75.

The extract of stamens from four flowers is given with mother's milk to child who is suffering from Cough and cold.

Zea mays L. (Poaceae), 'Bhutto', DJ-The Corn Silk (CS) obtained from 4 cob of maize are to be boiled in one glassful of drinking water till the quantity of the water becomes half. Then it is to be filtered and sipped slowly by the patient at bed time. This extract has to be taken for atleast 3 days in a row. This dissolves the stone in the kidney.

DISCUSSION

The paper provides the information on ethno medicinal uses of flowers of 18 plant species belonging to 16 genera under 14 families used in the treatment of different types of ailments by Bhil tribes of Ratlam district (MP). This ethno medicinal data provide baseline information to start the search for new compounds using modern scientific tools of phytochemistry, pharmacology & pharmacognosy. This ethno medicinal information will help us in developing novel drug formulations to cure various ailments. This valuable ethno medicinal knowledge of tribes needs to be preserved before it is eroded.

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